

DARE BOYS

In Trenton



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The bear was reaching out its paw.

The Dare Boys
in
Trenton

BY
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THE DARE BOYS AT TRENTON

CHAPTER I

THE PATRIOT ARMY IN CAMP

IT was the 10th day of December, of the year
1776.

In camp on the west bank of the Delaware River, in Pennsylvania, a few miles above Trenton on the New Jersey side, was the remnant of the Continental Army of America. It consisted of only a small fragment of the army that had a few months before met the British in battle on Long Island, for there were only about 3,500 men left. And of these a goodly number were ill from exposure, and from lack of sufficient clothing to protect their bodies from the chill of the cold winter weather.

That terrible retreat across New Jersey, through New Brunswick, Princeton, and on to, and across the Delaware, with the British Army in close pursuit, had been finished, and now the

remnant of the army was encamped here, with the river between it and the enemy. Safe temporarily they thought, but with the freezing of the river, the British would likely cross, attack and probably crush the patriot army and with this extinguish the hopes of the patriotic people of America at the same time.

So confident were the British that the war was practically at an end, that a goodly portion of the British force had been detached and sent to Newport, this being considered a strategic point, and the presence of the British force there would enable British vessels from England to enter the Sound and proceed to New York. Generals Howe and Cornwallis had gone to New York, there to enjoy themselves, while waiting for the Delaware River to freeze over, and Donop and Rahl, at Trenton, in command of the Hessians, and Grant, with his Scotchmen, at Burlington, were considered sufficiently strong to finish the work, when the time should arrive.

Not knowing but the army might stay here all winter, General Washington ordered the soldiers to build log cabins, and they were busily engaged in this work. The ringing of the axes and the crash of falling trees were sounds heard on every

hand, and the log cabins were going up rapidly indeed. The men worked with a will, and by the twelfth they had erected a sufficient number of cabins to accommodate the army. In the rude fireplaces wood blazed, and the soldiers were now more comfortable than they had been since leaving the vicinity of New York.

And then it set in to snow, and kept it up steadily, till there was at least a foot of snow on the ground. This did not add much to the discomfort of the soldiers, however. What bothered them most was the lack of provisions. They did not have enough to eat, and being hungry, they were rather cross, most of the time.

Perhaps the best-natured of all the soldiers, were three youths of eighteen years or under, who had been members of the army several months, having taken part in two or three battles, and who looked upon themselves as being veterans indeed. These youths were Dick and Tom Dare, brothers, and Ben Foster, a neighbor youth, a schoolmate and friend. The homes of the three were not far distant from the encampment, being over in New Jersey, at a point about three miles east of Philadelphia. Perhaps their cheerfulness and good nature may have been in-

duced to a certain extent by the knowledge of the proximity of their homes, but be that as it may, they were lively and cheerful at all times, and now as they sat, on the evening of the twelfth of December, with the wind sighing through the trees and the snow coming down, silently and swiftly, they conversed cheerfully, and the other soldiers who occupied the cabin in company with the three felt better and more content as a result of listening to the lively conversation of the youths.

Presently their conversation turned on the subject of provisions, and Tom Dare said:

"Now that we have finished building the cabins, why can't we put in some time hunting? There ought to be game in this forest."

"I have thought of that," said Dick Dare, a manly, handsome youth. "We will see what we can do in the hunting line to-morrow."

"Why wait till to-morrow?" queried Ben Foster. "It won't be dark for a couple of hours yet. Let's go out and see if we can't find some game this evening."

"That's the talk," said Tim Murphy, an Irish soldier, a good-natured, warm-hearted fellow. "Sure an' av ye boys want to go hunting, it's

mesilf will go wid yez. But there is one kind of game thot Oi'm in favor of huntin' thot maybe ye have not thought about."

"What kind is that?" queried Dick, with a smile.

"Tories!" said Tim, grinning.

The youths laughed. "You mean that we shall look for Tories, and that when we find them we shall levy toll on them, Tim?" Dick queried.

"Just thot, Dick, my bye. Phwat do yez think av the oidea?"

"I think it a pretty good one."

"So do I," said Tom, his eyes sparkling. "It would be no more than right to make the people who are in favor of the king help support the patriot army."

"That is what I think, too," said Ben.

"Und dot is der vay I loog at id, too, alretty yet," said Fritz Schmockenburg, a German soldier, a short, fat fellow, almost as broad as he was long.

"Sure, an' av Dootchy favors the oidea, thot settles it," said Tim, with a comical air. "An' since the rist av yez are in favor av the oidea, let's get permission av the captain an' go an' see

av we can foind a Tory or two in this part av the country."

"I'm agreeable," said Dick.

Tom and Ben, and Fritz also, said the same.

"All roight," said Tim. "Dick, will yez go an' ask the captain to let us go hunting?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "I'll see him at once." Then he rose and left the cabin, and making his way to another cabin not far distant, entered. Here he found Captain Morgan, who returned Dick's salute and asked pleasantly, "What can I do for you, Dick?"

"I have come to ask a favor, sir," was the reply.

"Name it," quietly.

"Myself and some of my comrades are desirous of going hunting, sir," explained Dick, "and I have come to ask permission."

The captain looked at the bright face of the youth rather keenly, a twinkle in his eye, and then asked:

"What do you purpose hunting, my boy?"

Dick smiled, as he thought of Tim's suggestion, and said: "Oh, anything and everything in the way of game, sir. We won't be averse to getting rabbits, squirrels, wild turkeys, deer —

anything, sir, that will add to our food supply."

"How many wish to go?" the captain asked.

"Five. Tim Murphy, Fritz Schmockenburg, Ben Foster, my brother Tom, and myself."

"Very well, you may go," said the captain.

"But, be careful, and don't stay out very late."

"We will be in at a reasonable hour, sir. Thank you for granting us permission to go."

"That's all right, and I hope that you will have good success."

"We will try to get hold of something in the way of provisions," was the reply. And then Dick saluted and hastened back to the other cabin.

"It's all right," he announced to the waiting members of the prospective hunting party. "The captain gave us permission to go hunting."

"That is good," said Tim, with an air of satisfaction. "Get your guns, byes, an' come along."

All seized their guns, and then they sallied forth, into the outer world. They struck out through the forest and snow, heading toward the west. Dick took the lead, and close behind him were Tom, Ben and the Irish and Dutch soldiers.

On through the timber they went, and when they had gone perhaps half a mile Dick suddenly stopped and the rest did likewise.

"I see a rabbit," he said. And leveling his musket, he took careful aim, and fired.

"Sure yez got him, Dick, me bye," cried Tim. "Thot is the way to do it."

They secured the rabbit, and then moved onward through the forest. In less than an hour they had half a dozen rabbits, several squirrels and a wild turkey. And then, at a point perhaps two miles from the encampment, they came to a road, which they followed a short distance and then observed a house, which stood back perhaps fifty yards from the road.

"Now av this is the home av a Tory, we'll be 'after takin' home somethin' besides rabbits, squirrels and turkeys," said Tim. "It's mesilf would loike to get hold av some p'raties, so Oi would."

"Fried potatoes would taste pretty good, Tim," agreed Dick. "Well, let's see whether or not we have happened upon the home of a Tory."

"I hope we have," said Tom.

Then they advanced to the door, on which

Dick rapped, and after a few moments, they heard footsteps within the house. Then the door was opened, and they found themselves confronted by a thin, vinegary-visaged woman of perhaps fifty years, who regarded them curiously, and in not a very friendly manner.

"Good evening, ma'am," said Dick, politely.

"Who air ye, an' what do ye want?" was the ungracious response, ignoring the salutation. She looked at them suspiciously.

"We are patriot soldiers," replied Dick. "I suppose that you are patriots here, also, ma'am?"

"Well, ye're mistaken, young man," snapped the woman. "We ain't rebels here. We are loyal to the king, an' I should think that anybody with any sense would be. Ye don't think ye kin fight ag'in ther king, do ye?"

"We have been fighting against him several months, already," replied Dick.

"An' have got the worst uv et, too," triumphantly. "My old man says thet thar ain't only a han'ful uv rebel sojers left, an' thet as soon as the Delaware River freezes over the British will come acrost an' capture 'em."

"So your old man thinks that, does he?" said Dick, coldly.

"Yas, an' I'm glad thet the British have whipped the beggars, too."

"Oh, ye are, are yez?" remarked Tim Murphy, sarcastically. Then to Dick he went on: "Sure, Dick, this is wan av thim Tories phwat we wur lookin' for, an' Oi'm in favor av seein' av there are some provisions to be found about the place. Sure an' ye have some p'raties an' sech-like around here, haven't ye, now, ma'am?"

"We have, but they're not fur rebels," cried the woman. "Ye'll git none of 'em," and then she shut the door in their faces.

"Hullo, phwat do yez think av thot, Dick?" exclaimed Tim. "Sure an' she's not very po-loite, do yez moind."

"Dot vos an insults," said Fritz. "Vot for she slam der door our faces in, alretty, hey?"

"Let's help ourselves to whatever we find in the way of provisions, Dick," said Tom.

"That's what I say," said Ben.

"Sure an' thot's phwat we'll do!" declared Tim, and he thumped loudly on the door.

There sounded footsteps within, and then the door was opened again, and the woman stood there on the threshold, a dishrag in her hand, and an angry look on her face.

"What do ye mean poundin' on my door in that manner?" she cried. "Go away from here at onct, d'ye hear? I don't want any rebels foolin' aroun' this place."

"We'll go whin we have hilped ourselves to a few p'raties and cabbages an' sich-like, ma'am," said Tim, and he started to enter the house, past the woman's form. But he did not succeed — not just then, at any rate, for with an inarticulate cry of rage, the woman slapped him in the face with the dishrag, filling his eyes and mouth with greasy dish-water, temporarily blinding him and well-nigh choking him, for he coughed and gurgled at a great rate, and clawed at his eyes, as he staggered backward into the arms of his comrades, and then the woman stepped quickly back, and slammed the door shut, and they heard a bar drop into place.

"Oh, vot a vomans dot iss!" gasped Fritz. "She iss der vorstest fighder of any Dory vot I haf efer seen, alretty!"

CHAPTER II

FORAGING

TIM, coughing and sputtering, presently got the dish-water wiped out of his eyes and coughed up out of his throat — what he had not already swallowed — and then he said:

“Sure an’ (cough) yez are roight (cough, sputter) wanst in your loife (cough, sputter), Dootchy. She’s a foighter, thot’s phwat she is (cough, sputter), an’ Oi’m not afther loikin’ bein’ smacked in the face wid a dishrag. Faugh! Sure an’ thot grasy wather don’t taste good at all.”

In spite of their efforts to control their risibles, the boys could not refrain from laughing, and even Tim, after he had gotten rid of the greasy water, grinned and chuckled a bit. He was Irish, and could enjoy the humorous side of the affair.

“Oi don’t blame yez fur laughin’, byes,” he said. “Sure an’ it seems funny now, an’ thot’s

a fact. But, Oi'm goin' to have some av thim p'raties an cabbages, just the same. Are yez wid me?"

"We certainly are, Tim," said Dick.

"That's what we are," from Tom.

"Yes, we're with you, on that deal, Tim," declared Ben.

"Yah, ve vill hellub you get der potatoes und gabbages, alretty yet, Tim," concluded Fritz.

"Thin here we go, byes," and with the words, Tim plunged against the door with all his force. He was big and strong, and the door, even with the bar up on the inside, creaked and groaned at a great rate.

"Lind me a little help, byes," cried Tim, as he drew back for another plunge.

"You put your two hundred pounds against the door, along with Tim, Fritz," said Dick. "That ought to fetch it, all right."

"Yah, I vill do dot," said Fritz. And then the two of them plunged against the door with all their force, and there was a crash. The door went inward, striking the floor with a thud, with Tim and Fritz on top of it, having fallen with it, so great was their impetus. And before they could scramble to their feet, the woman, with a

shriek of anger was upon them, flailing them fiercely with a broom, and exclaiming angrily at each blow.

“Break my door down, will ye? (Thump, thump, whack!) Well, take that! (Thump, whack! Thump, whack!) Take that, an’ git outen my house, ye dratted rebels, ye! (Several thumps and whacks in succession, mixed with a few howls of pain from Tim and Fritz.) D’ye hear? Git outen here, drat ye!”

Dick, at this juncture, leaped forward and grabbed the broom out of the angry woman’s hands, and pushed her back, not roughly, but in a manner that was effective. Tim and Fritz improved the opportunity and hastily scrambled to their feet, and began to feel rather gingerly of the places where the broom had taken effect, while they murmured to themselves a few remarks that they deemed suited to the occasion. And Tom and Ben, being youths and able to see the ludicrous, had hard work to keep from laughing aloud. It was too funny, they thought, the way Tim and Fritz had gone down and got whacked with the broom.

“My dear madam,” said Dick, kindly but determinedly. “This will not do at all. We are in need of some provisions, and intend to help

ourselves to anything that we find that will help relieve our hunger, and it will do no good for you to act in this manner. We don't want to handle anyone roughly, so the best thing you can do is to sit down over there and keep quiet. And if you wish to get rid of us, the easiest and best way is to tell us where to find the provisions, when we will secure what we can carry and be on our way."

"I'll not help ye rob me," cried the woman, angrily. "Whut ye take ye'll have to find yourselves, an' when my old man comes, he'll make ye wish't ye had stayed away frum here an' not broke into the house the way ye have. Look at thet door! Thet's a nice way to do, hain't et! Drat ye, fur cowardly, robbin' rebels, anyhow!"

"My dear madam, these are war-times," said Dick, quietly. "You are an avowed sympathizer of the king, while we are patriot soldiers. You cannot blame us, therefore, if we take some provisions from one who is an avowed enemy."

"I can an' do blame ye," disputed the woman, "an' ef ye go ahead an' take any uv our provisions, ye'll be sorry fur et, thet's what ye will!"

"The p'raties an' cabbages'll be in the cellar,

Dick, more'n loikely," said Tim, at this juncture. "We'll go down there an' see phwat we can foind, innyhow."

"Stay outen the cellar!" cried the woman, fiercely. "Ye'll be sorry ef ye take anythin' frum there."

"I don't vos t'ink so," grunted Fritz. "I vill nefer be sorriness for takin' brovisions from dis house, nein."

"Come wid me, byes," said Tim. "Oi'll show yez the way to the cellar, an' thin we'll load up wid phwat we foind there."

The woman made a move as if to put herself in their path, but Dick held her back, as gently as possible, and although she talked fast and rather viciously, she did not strike or claw the youth. There was something about the kind and dignified manner in which he talked to her and acted toward her that had its effect.

"I'm sorry, madam, to have to do the way we are doing," said Dick, "but as I told you, we are patriot soldiers, on short rations at the encampment, and as these are war-times, it behooves us to make our enemies furnish us with provisions whenever and wherever possible."

"Well, I can't help myself," said the woman,

an' ye can go ahead an' do as ye please, so long's there's only one poor, lone woman here to face ye, but when my old man comes, he'll make ye sorry ye hev done whut ye hev, mind what I tell ye."

"We have no fear of your husband, madam. He is a king's man, a Tory, and the best thing he can do is to keep quiet and behave himself. To tell the truth, I don't like Tories very well, madam. I think that all Americans ought to be patriots, and I have no patience with those who persist in remaining loyal to the king—to a man who extorts money from them, as toll, when he has never even seen them, and cares nothing at all for them. Why should you give a portion of what you earn with your labor to a man away over in England that you have never seen, and whom you care nothing for? Tell me that, madam."

"Ye can't convert me, young man," said the woman. "The king has a right to whut he takes, because he is the king. We couldn't git along without a king, nohow."

"We can and will get along without a king, madam," said Dick, quietly. "We are Americans, not English people, and the king of Eng-

land has no right to rule us. We are going to be free, madam, and you will see the time when you will be glad this is so."

"I don't believe et," the woman denied. "I hate rebels. Oh, how I wish't my old man was here! He'd make ye git away in a hurry, he would!"

Dick continued to talk to the woman and give her reasons why the people of America ought to be free and independent, but he did not make much headway. She did not seem to let his arguments make any impression, and when the four came up out of the cellar, loaded down with bags of potatoes and cabbages, as well as other vegetables and fruits, she was evidently as strong a Tory as ever, and the way she berated the four was a caution. They paid no attention to her, however, and Tim said to Dick:

"There's a lot more in the cellar, Dick, me bye. Wull ye go down an' load up? Av so, we'll wait fur yez, here."

"Yes, I want to take a load, the same as the rest of you," said Dick. "I have been arguing with this woman, and trying to convert her to the patriot faith."

"An' ye didn't do et," cried the woman,

shrilly. "I'll never be a rebel, never! I hate rebels, an' I hate ye all, every one uv ye — drat ye, anyhow!"

"Oh, you'll change your mind about that, later on," said Dick, as he made his way down the cellar stair, access to which was had from the adjoining room.

"No, I won't," the woman declared, and it was evident, from the look on the faces of the four patriot soldiers, that they thought the same.

"Sure, an' it's a big job it'd be to convert her, Oi'm afther thinkin'," muttered Tim, and Fritz nodded assent and said:

"Yah, dot iss vot I t'ink, alretty. I would nod vant der shob uf converding her widout a broomstick, nein."

Tom and Ben said nothing, but it was evident, from the look on their faces, that they agreed with their comrades.

Dick, down in the cellar, filled a bag with potatoes, cabbages and other vegetables and food supplies, and had just finished, when he heard a great trampling and thumping, and angry exclamations, mixed with which was the shrill treble of the woman's voice. Seizing the bag, he threw it across his shoulder and hastened up-

stairs and into the big front room, where the racket was being made. And when he entered the room, he found two men engaged in a combat of no mean proportions, at the same time giving utterance to angry exclamations and threats, similar to those Dick had heard before coming upstairs. One of the men was Tim, and the other was a big, raw-boned, rough-looking fellow, a farmer undoubtedly, and Dick at once guessed that he was the husband the woman had talked about so much. He had evidently arrived, as the woman had stated that she wished he would do, and had become engaged in a fight with the Irish soldier.

Tom, Ben and Fritz, their bags of provisions deposited alongside that of Tim, in one corner, stood at one side of the room, watching the battle with eager interest, and at the other side of the room, dancing from one foot to the other, and keeping up a constant stream of advisory exclamations, was the woman.

"Thump 'im, Zack!" she would cry. "Pound 'im! Give et to 'im, good. Choke the rebel, Zack! Thet's the way. L'arn 'em not to come to our house an' act like they own et. Lick 'im, good, Zack. Ye kin do et!"

And the two combatants, growling like wild-cats, and snarling threats at each other, fought on, neither as yet seeming to have much the advantage.

"Lick me, is et?" growled Tim. "Wull, whin yez do thot, just let Tim Murphy know it, will yez? Take thot!" thumping his opponent on the jaw with his huge fist. "Thot's fur the smack yer ould woman giv' me in the face wid a dishrag. An' here's wan on your own account," giving Zack another blow on the jaw. "How d'ye loike et, Zack, me bye?"

Zack's answer was a fierce growl of rage, and a fierce attempt to return the blows with interest, but he was not as strong as the Irish soldier, and it now became evident that he was getting the worst of it.

Dick had deposited his bag of provisions on the floor, and now he called out: "What is the use of fighting, men? It will do no good. Stop it, at once."

"We are not foightin', Dick, me bye," replied Tim, with grim humor. "It's mesilf is doin' wid the ould man phwat yez wur' thryin' to do wid the ould woman—convart him. Just wait a few minnets an' Oi'll have him worked over into

a purthy fair imitation av a patriot, so Oi wull.” Thump, he landed a blow on his opponent’s jaw, and then said, persuasively:

“Sure, an’ yez are beginnin’ to belave thot this counthry would be bettther off widout a king, now, are yez not, Zack, me bye? Spake up. Be honest. Tell the byes thot yez are becomin’ impregnated wid patriotism, an’ thot yez are av the opinion thot the king is a fraud an’ a scoundrel. Spake up, Oi say, or it’s mesilf wull pound yez till yez resimble nothing so much as a jelly-fish.”

“Don’t ye do et, Zack!” cried the woman, evidently alarmed by the strenuous method of conversation being dealt out by the husky Irish soldier. “Don’t ye say nothin’ like thet, no-how. Ef ye go over to the rebels, I won’t, Zack Boggins, an’ thet’s all there is to et.”

“I hain’t goin’ to do nothin’ uv thet kin’, Marthy,” was the reply. “I’m a king’s man, I am, an’ I don’t never ’low ter be no rebel.”

“Oh, yis yez do, Zack,” cried Tim, whacking the Tory on the jaw again. “Yez are fast comin’ aroun’ to the soide av the patriots, only yez don’t realize et. Ye air becomin’ saturated wid patriotism right now, an’ in a few days

yez'll be hurrahin' fur George Washington, the same as the rist av us."

"I won't do nothin' uv the kin', drat ye!" snarled the Tory, trying to gouge Tim's eyes out. "I'm a loyal king's man, I am, an' I intend ter stay thet way."

"Oh, no yez don't, Zack," insisted the Irishman, thumping him two or three times in succession. "Yez are goin' to become convarted to the patriot faith, an' Oi'm goin' to come over ivery day an' argue wid yez till yez see your mistake in bein' a king's man an' take soides wid George Washington an' the patriots."

"You'll do nothin' uv the kin', drat ye!" shrilly cried the woman. "Ef ye come foolin' aroun' here ag'in, I'll throw scaldin' water on ye, thet's whut I'll do!"

"You have argued with him enough for one time, I guess, Tim," said Dick, gravely. "Let him alone, now. We will go back to camp, and as you say, you can return to-morrow to continue the work of conversion to the patriot faith, if you like."

"He'd better not!" cried the woman, threateningly.

"All roight, Dick, me bye," grinned Tim,

who was feeling pretty happy as a result of the fight. "Phwat yez say goes wid me, ivery toime, an' Oi'll let up on him now. But Oi really think thot Oi shall have to come again an' reason wid him, an' argue the matther. He has had patriotic ideas an' instincts aroused in him, this evenin', an' it won't take a great deal av arguin' to complate his convarsion, Oi'm thinkin'."

"If ye know when ye're well off, ye'll stay away frum here!" shrilled the woman, and Zack growled truculently:

"Ef ye think ye kin convart me ter be a rebel, ye're mistook, an' et's more'n likely thet ef ye come foolin' aroun' here ag'in, ye'll git a bullet inter ye."

"Oi'll risk et, so Oi wull," grinned Tim. "But, let's be goin', byes. Sure an' this exercise has made me hungry, an' it's meself is eager to git back to camp an' roast a few of these p'raties, so Oi am."

So the five patriots shouldered their bags of provisions, and followed by the shrilly-yelled threats and warnings of the woman to stay away, and the muttered threats of the man, they took their departure and wended their way through

the timber and snow to the encampment, where they were given a warm welcome by their comrades.

General Washington and the members of his staff, and the other officers of the army, and in fact a number of the soldiers as well, dined on roasted potatoes and boiled cabbage that evening, and with a bit of fruit as dessert; and the valiant five who had foraged so successfully felt that they had indeed done a good thing in relieving the Tory household of a portion of its stock of winter provisions.

“An’ it’s mesilf wull make a patriot out av Zack Boggins before Oi get through wid him,” declared Tim. “Oi’ll bate patriotism into him till he yells ‘Hurra fur George Washington’.”

CHAPTER III

THE HUNTING PARTY

IT snowed all night, and next day the snow covered the ground to the depth of nearly two feet. The weather was not cold, however, and seated in their cabins, with blazing logs in the fireplaces, the patriot soldiers were fairly comfortable. The only trouble, now, seemed to be the lack of sufficient food.

General Washington and the members of his staff held a council, and it was decided that, owing to the fact that they were short of provisions, it would be a good plan to forage in the surrounding country in a systematic manner, and also to send out hunters to kill all the wild game that could be found. In this manner sufficient provisions might be secured, they thought, to enable the army to get along fairly well for quite a while.

To the captains of the various companies was delegated the task of naming the hunters, half a

dozen to be sent from each company. Also they were to appoint the members of the various parties that were to visit the farms in the surrounding country and secure provisions.

Dick and Tom Dare, Ben Foster, Tim Murphy and Fritz Schmockenburg were named as hunters from their company, and a party from among the other members of the company was made up to go on a foraging expedition. At this Tim growled a little.

"Sure, an' Oi would rather have gone wid the foragin' party," he declared. "Oi would loike to have another argyment wid Zack Boggins. Oi belave thot another argyment or two loike we had yestherday avenin' would convart him to the patriot faith, so Oi do."

"Oh, well, you can attend to that some other time," smiled Dick. "The lesson you gave him yesterday evening hasn't fully soaked into his system yet, likely."

"Wull, Oi hope thot whin it does soak into his system, it wull have some effect on him," with a grin. And then he went on: "It's me-silf would loike to soak him wan atween the oyes wid me fist, the same as his woife was afther doin' me wid the dishrag."

The others laughed at remembrance of the episode in question, and Tom exclaimed: "Oh, Tim, but you did look funny, coughing and sputtering, and clawing to get the dish-water out of your eyes! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Fritz. "Dot vos der funniest t'ing vot efer I seen in my life, alretty."

"Ho, ho, ho!" mocked Tim. "Yis, Oi s'pose it wur funny to yez, Fritz. No doubt yez enjoyed it. But take me worrud for it, av thot woman had smacked yez in the face wid a dish-rag, yez would not see innythin' about it to laugh at."

"You couldn't pull me within half a mile uf dot house mit a team uf oxen, alretty," declared Fritz, with a shake of the head. "Nein. Ven I go foragin' anudder time, I vill go in der udder directions, yah."

The others laughed, and then they finished their preparations, and set out on their hunting expedition. They headed in a direction that would lead them to some hilly and rocky country, covered with a heavy growth of timber, and also thick with underbush, the edge of which they had reached but had not penetrated the evening before. Here, they felt confident, they

would find game of various kinds. They even expected to find large game, such as deer and bears.

"I would like to shood ein bear, alretty," said Fritz. "I nefer killed von, und id would be somedings to talk about in afder years uf I vos to kill ein bear."

"Oi see Fritze killin' a bear!" exclaimed Tim, sarcastically. "It's meself would bet thot av he saw a bear before it saw him, he would run so fast thot the friction from his feet workin' so loively would melt the snow all along the path av his floight."

"Don'd you believe dot, Tim Murphies," protested Fritz, when the youths had ceased laughing. "I would nefer run from ein bear, nod a bit uf id. I would shoot der bear dead in his tracks, alretty."

"Yez'd fall dead in your tracks, more loikely," was Tim's skeptical reply.

"Shoost you vait," said Fritz. "I bet you I vos kill ein bear shoost so quickness as vat you do, Tim Murphies."

"All roight, we'll wait," grinned Tim, who delighted in teasing his Dutch comrade. "All the same, Oi'm bettin' that Oi bag the first bear."

"All righd, ve'll see aboud dot," nodded Fritz.

The hunting party made its way through the timber at as swift a pace as was possible. Wading through such deep snow was tedious work. But in the course of an hour or so they arrived at the edge of the district they were aiming for. Here they paused a few minutes to rest, and it was decided that they should separate, the better to catch sight of any game that might be abroad in the wilds. Spread out to a width of a mile or so, as they would be if separated by a distance of from a quarter to a third of a mile, they would have a far greater chance to find game than if they went in a bunch.

Tim took the left side, Fritz being next to him. Then came Tom, and next to him was Ben, and at the extreme right was Dick. They entered the thick growth of timber and underbrush in this position, and while Tom, being the central one, went straight ahead, Tim and Fritz walked diagonally to the left, while Ben and Dick did the same to the right. Thus their paths were divergent, and the distance between the five hunters increased with every step they took.

Fritz, his musket over his shoulder, plodded along through the snow, at a slow gait, but with

a grimly determined air. He was so heavy, and so short of leg, that wading through the deep snow was more difficult and entailed more labor and exertion than was the case with the others, but Fritz was game, and plodded along resolutely. He wanted to find and kill a bear, so as to beat Tim, and he kept a sharp lookout ahead as he made his way through the timber and underbush.

"Uf I see ein bear, und shoold id dead, den I vill haf der laugh on Tim Murphies, alretty," he thought. "Und I vill do dot, too, I bet you."

On Fritz went, slowly, and although he kept a sharp lookout, he did not catch sight of any kind of game. Not even a squirrel or rabbit came under his notice, but the Dutch soldier was not easily discouraged, and he kept on, and gazed eagerly about him, hoping to see a bear.

Occasionally he communed with himself and commented on his seeming lack of luck.

Perhaps an hour passed, and then he heard a musket shot over to his left, in the direction of Tim. This excited Fritz not a little, and he looked in that direction, and muttered discontentedly:

"I vunder, now, uf dot Tim Murphies has

shotted ein bear, alretty? Maybe so, for he has such luckiness vot I nefer seen."

Fritz plodded along, keeping a sharp lookout ahead and to either side, and suddenly he heard the sound of crackling underbrush over toward the left. He stopped at once, and listened intently.

"Vot iss dot, I vunder?" he murmured. Then an excited look appeared on his face, as the crackling of the underbrush grew louder, and he went on: "I bet anyt'ing dot der bear vot Tim Murphies shotted iss coming dis vay! Tim missed der bear, alretty, und it iss runnin' away mit itself."

Fritz figured that this was his opportunity. He did not doubt but what he had guessed correctly regarding the matter, and that a bear was coming, and that it was one that Tim had seen and fired at, without doing it any injury to speak of, and now if he, Fritz, could kill the animal, he could indeed have the better of Tim, and could laugh at him and make sport of his abilities as a hunter, the same as Tim had done with him.

The crashing sound drew nearer, and Fritz stopped, faced in that direction, cocked his mus-

ket, and held himself in readiness to fire the instant the animal came in sight. He did not doubt that it was a bear, and when a few moments later the animal appeared, bursting from the midst of a thick clump of underbrush about twenty yards distant, the hunter saw that his guess had been correct—it was a bear, and a big one at that. In fact, it looked to Fritz's excited imagination, almost as big as the side of a house.

He had never supposed that bears were so large, or so fierce-looking. For this bear certainly did look fierce. Its nose was streaked with blood, and its eyes were rolling and fierce, and Fritz decided that Tim must have shot and wounded the brute, angering it, but doing no particular damage. At that moment, Fritz almost wished that Tim had succeeded in killing the bear. He would have been willing to relinquish the glory of having killed the first bear, to have been able to avoid being face to face with this ferocious-looking brute. But Fritz was possessed of considerable courage, and when the bear, on catching sight of the human being confronting it, stopped, and stood there growling and glaring, and shaking its head angrily, he raised his

musket to his shoulder, took careful aim, and fired.

Crack! The musket-shot rang out loudly on the still air of the forest, and then with a wild snort of pain and anger, the bear charged straight at Fritz. Evidently it was not seriously injured by the shot, and Fritz, realizing that if the musket-ball would not injure the bear, his pistol-bullets would not, stood there, staring at the oncoming monster in paralyzed terror. The brute certainly did look fierce, charging at him, with its eyes red and rolling, blood trickling down its snout, and with hoarse roaring growls emerging from its throat.

For a moment Fritz thought that he was doomed, but then the instinct of self-preservation seized hold upon him, and with a wild yell, he slung the musket at the bear, and turning, ran for dear life. A tree that stood near, had limbs that were within reach from the ground, and seizing hold of these branches, Fritz began scrambling up the tree with a great deal more agility than one to have looked at his unwieldy body would have deemed possible.

But he had an incentive. The bear had followed promptly, and was close at hand as the Dutch hunter went scrambling up, and indeed

by rearing up onto its hindlegs, and reaching up with its forepaw, it managed to insert its claws into the tail of Fritz's coat and temporarily stay his ascent. Only temporarily, however, for the Dutch hunter, nerved to the task by his terror, clung to the limbs and pulled with all his might, and the cloth, though strong, gave way, leaving its owner free to continue the ascent of the tree, while Bruin, surprised by the sudden cessation of resisting power, fell sprawling on his back in the snow, the piece of Fritz's coat-tail waving in his claws like a flag of triumph.

Fritz improved his opportunity, and climbed as swiftly as possible on up into the tree. When about twenty feet from the ground, he paused and looked down to see what Bruin was doing. What he saw did not reassure him, for the bear, having scrambled to its feet, had also begun climbing the tree, and although an unwieldy brute, it was proving itself quite as good a climber as had been the case with Fritz, and as he realized this, the Dutch hunter gave utterance to a groan.

"I forgotted dot bears can climb trees, alretty," muttered Fritz. "Gootness, vot shall I do mit meinselbs? Der brute vill be up here in a few minutes, und den vot vill hebben?"

Fritz had a pretty good idea what would hap-

pen, and the thought did not add to his equanimity by any means. He was fat, and would be a fine morsel for Bruin, but he did not care to figure in the rôle of a square meal for his bearship. The Dutch hunter had decided objections to doing this, in fact.

But how was he to avoid doing so? That was the question. And it would have to be answered quickly, too, for the bear was climbing swiftly, and would soon be within reaching distance of Fritz.

After a few moments of thought, Fritz decided that the best thing he could do, was to climb out on a limb. By selecting one about as large as his leg, it would hold up his weight without breaking, and would be small enough so that it would, as Fritz fondly believed, be extremely difficult for the bear to climb out on. Having decided, Fritz at once put his plan into effect. He selected a limb that looked to be about what he desired, and taking a seat astride the branch, with his legs hanging down on either side, the Dutch hunter began working his way out toward the extremity of the limb. It extended upward at a slight angle, but as he got farther out the limb

gradually bent downward till it stuck almost straight out from the main body of the tree. When out about a dozen feet, Fritz stopped, and sat there, watching with no little interest, the actions of the bear. Would Bruin try to follow out on the limb? This was the question Fritz was asking himself, and when the bear reached the limb in question, the matter was settled at once, but not to Fritz's satisfaction, for — Bruin started out on the branch without any hesitation.

"Mine gracious," murmured Fritz. "Will he onct eat me up, no? yes?"

Still growling with anger, induced by the pain of the musket-ball, which had struck on the side of his snout, and then glanced off, inflicting a painful but not a serious wound, and with eyes wickedly rolling, Bruin came slowly and carefully toward the man on the limb. Fritz stared in horror. This was more than he had bargained for. His plan to get out of reach of the bear's ugly-looking teeth and claws was a failure. The bear would soon be within reach of him, and then what would he do? What could he do. Fritz looked down at the ground, at least twenty feet below, and felt that a jump from the limb would

be suicidal, for right underneath where he sat there chanced to be a huge boulder, a rough stone, to fall upon which, from such a height, would be almost certain death. It really seemed as if there was no chance to get out of reach of the bear's teeth and claws.

Fritz, desperate, now edged his way out on the limb as far as he could go without falling off, and then he sat there, holding on like grim death and staring with bulging eyes at the approaching bear.

Slowly and surely, balancing as carefully and successfully as a tight-rope walker, approached the bear. He was at home in the tree, but the size of the limb made it necessary for him to advance slowly and exercise considerable caution. But still he came on toward Fritz, closer and closer, slowly but surely, and realizing that there was no possible chance for him to do anything, Fritz be-thought himself to yell for help. Perhaps he might make one of his fellow-hunters hear, and in that case one of them might put in an appearance and shoot Bruin, and save him from being eaten by the brute.

True the prospects were not very hopeful but there may have passed through his nearly be-

numbed brain some recollection of the saying that drowning men grasp at straws.

He at once lifted up his voice and yelled lustily: "Hel-lub! Hel-lub! Hel-lub!"

Then he listened intently, but heard no sound, save the accentuated growls of the bear, who resented the efforts its intended victim was making to attract aid, doubtless. At any rate, Bruin growled louder, and moved forward somewhat faster, while it fixed its wicked, rolling eyes upon the Dutch hunter with a determined air.

"Der brute will eat me up, alretty, uf I don't vos ged hellub," exclaimed Fritz, almost despairingly, and then again he yelled loudly:

"Hel-lub! Hel-lub! Dick! Tom! Ben! Vere are you? Gome quickness, und kill dis bear! Hel-lub! Hel-lub!"

But still there came no answering voice, and Fritz, after listening a few moments, and noting the dangerous proximity of the bear's ugly snout, groaned again, in terror.

"Dis iss — awfulness, alretty!" he murmured. "Uf vun uf der boys don't vos gome bretty quickness, id iss all up mit Fritz Schmockenburg, yah!"

Closer and closer drew Bruin, and now he paused, sniffed at his intended victim with what, so it seemed to Fritz, was a supremely satisfied air, and lifted one great paw, and reached tentatively out toward the shrinking, terrified Dutchman.

A gasp of utter horror escaped the lips of Fritz.

CHAPTER IV

DICK AND THE DEER

DICK DARE loved to hunt. He was a good hunter, and usually bagged more game than any of his companions when on a hunting expedition. Now, away over on the right, he made up his mind to get a lot of game, if possible.

"It will come in mighty handy," he murmured. "If the soldiers had plenty to eat, they would not yield to the cold so easily, nor would they get sick as a result of a little exposure."

Dick saw a number of squirrels and rabbits, but refrained from firing at them. He had his musket loaded for large game, and wanted to get a bear or deer.

He made his way slowly along, keeping a sharp lookout ahead, and had gone perhaps two miles, when suddenly he stopped and stepping behind a tree, gazed ahead with eager interest.

"I was sure I saw something that looked like a deer, away ahead, yonder, between the trees,"

he murmured. "Yes," after a few moments, "I am sure that's a deer! Now, to get close enough to shoot it. That will be a difficult thing to do, but what little wind there is, comes from that direction, which is favorable."

Dick at once began slipping up on the deer. He was skillful at this kind of work, for he had done much of it, and unless the deer took fright at something else, or moved away without being frightened, he would be able to get near enough to shoot it, he felt certain.

Closer and closer Dick drew to his intended quarry. He took advantage of the trees, rocks and everything that would afford him cover, and in this manner managed to keep from being seen.

At last, crouching behind a fallen tree, Dick measured the distance between himself and the deer carefully with his eyes. He decided that he was close enough, and slowly and carefully he pushed the barrel of the musket across the top of the tree, and pressing the butt of the weapon against his shoulder, took careful aim.

When certain that he had good aim, he pulled the trigger. Loudly the shot rang out, and with a peculiar bleating sound the deer leaped from the top of the little mound on which it was stand-

ing, and dashed wildly away through the timber.

Dick leaped up, and gave utterance to a disappointed exclamation.

"I must have been a little too far away after all," he murmured. "That is indeed too bad."

He hastened to the spot where the deer had stood, and a quick glance showed him blood on the snow.

"Ah, I wounded it, anyway," he said. "Perhaps it is fatally wounded, and if I follow its tracks I will find it."

Dick paused long enough to reload his musket, and then set out on the trail of the wounded deer. It was easy to follow, for there were no other tracks to be seen. And, too, there was a trail of blood, even easier to follow than the tracks.

"I think the deer is mortally wounded and will fall before it goes far," was Dick's thought, and he hastened onward, eager to find his game.

On he went, almost at a run, and he expected to come upon the deer lying dead in the snow at almost any moment, but he covered a mile, at least, and still the trail of tracks and blood stretched before him, with the wounded deer nowhere in sight.

Dick noted that the trail was bending around

toward the left. The deer was traveling in a semicircle. The thought came to him that the deer might cross the path of one of the other members of the hunting party, and be shot down, and he expected to hear a shot at any moment, but did not. All was silence, save for the noise he made in hastening along the trail, through the timber and snow.

On he went, till he had gone at least another mile, and then suddenly he paused, and listened intently.

"I thought I heard a voice calling," he murmured. He stood there, listening, for perhaps a couple of minutes, and then, all being quiet, he again proceeded on the trail of the wounded deer.

Presently, however, he stopped again, and an exclamation escaped his lips.

"I'm sure I heard a voice calling, then," he murmured. "And it sounded like Fritz's voice."

He listened intently, and then to his hearing came, in a hoarse, but faint tone, the sound of a voice, calling, "Hel-lub! Hel-lub!"

"It's Fritz, sure enough!" exclaimed Dick. "And he's in trouble of some kind. I must go to his assistance."

The cry had sounded from the direction in

which the trail of the wounded deer led, and so Dick was enabled to follow the trail and at the same time proceed in the direction of the owner of the voice.

On Dick went, running as swiftly as possible, and suddenly he came out in a natural opening in the forest about fifty yards across, but with a large tree in the center, and up in the tree Dick saw a scene that was striking, to say the least — for, he had got there at just the moment when Bruin, having reached a point dangerously near to Fritz, was reaching out its paw and feeling tentatively for Fritz, while the Dutchman, pale and frightened-looking, was shrinking back and hanging onto the limb, astride which he was, with all his strength, clinging.

Had the situation not been really serious, Dick would have had to laugh, for Fritz certainly did look comical clinging there, and leaning back at such an angle that he was in danger of toppling over backward, while the bear, its nose wrinkled up, was pawing at the frightened Dutchman.

Fritz's attention was so taken up with Bruin that he did not see Dick. He had eyes only for the bear, and so did not guess that a rescuer was at hand. The bear, poking its paw out farther,

and unsheathing its claws, caught hold of Fritz's arm, and the points of the claws must have penetrated to the flesh, for Fritz suddenly set up a terrible howl.

"Oh-h-h!" he yelled. "Ouch! Stob dot, I say! Stob stickin' dose glaws into mein arm alretty! Oo-oo-oh!—yow! Ouch! Stob id, I say, or I'll knock you der limb off und smash you der jelly into, so I vill! Stob id, I dell you!"

Dick had taken up a good position, where he could get fine aim at the bear's heart, and leveling his musket, he took quick but careful aim. He had not called out to apprise Fritz of his presence, as that would take time, and now, having gotten good aim, he pulled the trigger.

Crack! the musket rang out, and the bear, giving vent to a roaring growl of pain and anger, swayed on the branch a few moments, trying to retain its equilibrium, and then pitched from the limb, straight down upon the rock twenty feet below, where it struck with a thud, knocking out what life had been left in it, and stretching out, dead.

The bear was a big one, and must have weighed at least four hundred pounds, for its weight had bent the limb down quite a ways be-

low the horizontal, and when the limb was released of its weight with such suddenness, it flew back upward with such force and quickness that Fritz, who had been almost paralyzed by the sound of the shot and the unceremonious leave-taking of Bruin, lost his hold. He was thrown several feet in the air, turned a somersault, and shot straight downward, alighting fairly upon the body of the dead bear, and rolling from there off upon the snow, where, after pawing and clawing around for a few moments he scrambled up. At once he started to run away at the top of his speed, evidently fearful that the bear would leap up and seize him if he did not put a considerable distance between himself and the animal.

Dick had witnessed the fall of the bear with satisfaction, and the acrobatic performance and fall of Fritz with alarm, for the thought had come to him that the Dutchman would be killed, but when he saw Fritz alight on the carcass of the bear and roll off into the snow, and then scramble to his feet and take to his heels, he knew his friend was not seriously injured, and he gave utterance to a hearty laugh. He could not help it, for the affair at its conclusion had certainly been a comical one. But before Fritz had reached

the deeper timber, Dick managed to stop laughing and call out, loudly:

"Stop, Fritz! Hold on. You are not hurt, and the bear is dead. Stop, I say, and come back."

When Fritz heard Dick's words, he paused, turned around, and looked back. His gaze rested first on the carcass of the bear, and noting that it was lying there motionless, his courage came back. He walked then slowly toward Dick, grinning in rather a shame-faced manner.

"Are you sureness dot der bear is dead, Dick?" he asked, as he drew near.

"Yes, too dead to skin," was the smiling reply. "I gave him a big load of bullets from my musket, to start with, and then he tumbled down twenty feet on his head, landing on the rock, and what little life that was left in him was crushed out when you struck on him, after your fall from the tree. It was lucky you did strike on the bear, Fritz. If you hadn't, you would likely have been killed, or at least badly injured."

"Dot iss so, Dick," agreed Fritz, a sober look on his face. "I vos t'ink dot my time vos come alretty, ven I vos tumblin' through der air, yah!" and he shook himself and made a comical grimace.

"Well, you're all right, Fritz. And you have bagged a bear. That is game worth while."

"If you don't vos come ven you did, Dick, I t'ink der bear vould have gotted me," said Fritz. "I can't glaim der bear as my game."

"Oh, yes you can. You finished him by falling on him and crushing his life out, Fritz," laughed Dick.

"Maybe so, Dick. I would like to glaim dot bear as my game, alretty, so as to haf der laugh on Tim Murphies, yah."

"All right, Fritz. It's your bear. You earned him, I think, by that tumble on his carcass."

"How did you habben to be here alretty, Dick?" queried Fritz. "You vos away ofer to der right-hand side."

"I shot a deer, and it ran in this direction. I was following the tracks, and they led me to this spot. The deer must have passed near here, but you did not see it, I guess?"

"Nein," said Fritz, with a comical grin. "I couldn't vos see anyt'ing but dot bear vot vas grinnin' in my face, alretty, an' clawin' at me, like he thought I vos his broberly — ugh!" and the Dutchman made another grimace.

Dick laughed. "I don't wonder that you

didn't see the deer," he said. "I don't suppose I would have done so either, under the same circumstances."

"I bet dot you wouldn't," nodded Fritz.

"Well, I'll go and see if I can find my deer now, Fritz," proposed Dick. "I think I'll come upon him near here, for I'm sure he was fatally wounded."

"Shall I go mit you, Dick?"

"No, you had better stay here with your bear."

"All righd."

Dick at once hastened away, again on the trail of the wounded deer, and had gone only about two hundred yards when sure enough he came upon the animal, lying motionless in the snow. It proved to be a good-sized deer, and was quite dead.

"Good," murmured Dick. "This deer and Fritz's bear will furnish a lot of meat for the soldiers. I guess I can drag it to where Fritz and the bear are."

He had no great difficulty in doing this, as the deer weighed only about two hundred pounds, and when he appeared at the edge of the opening, dragging the deer, Fritz gave utterance to a cry of delight and came hastening to Dick's assist-

ance. The two of them dragged the deer to a spot near the carcass of the bear, and then began discussing how they should get their game to the encampment.

"We'll make a sort of sledge," said Dick. "We can cut a couple of saplings, fasten them together to keep them from spreading, put some crosspieces on, and then place the carcasses of the deer and bear on it, and drag them to the camp without much difficulty."

"Yah, ve can do dot," agreed Fritz.

They got to work at once, and in half an hour they had constructed a rude sledge, on which they placed the carcasses of the deer and bear, and were ready to start.

"Shall we wait for der odder fellers?" queried Fritz.

"No. It was understood that we should go straight to the encampment if we succeeded in getting any big game," replied Dick. "They will come to camp as soon as they get enough game to make it worth their while, the same as we are going to do."

"Yah, dot iss so."

Then they took hold of the ends of the saplings, and started in the direction of camp. It

was slow work, and hard work, too, for the two carcasses were quite heavy, as we know, and it was hard work getting through among the trees, where they grew thickly, but after a couple of hours of hard toil, they managed to reach the encampment.

They were the first to return, and their coming with such fine game was hailed with delight by the soldiers, and the animals were quickly skinned and cut up. The meat was distributed throughout the encampment, some of the choicer portions being taken to headquarters for General Washington and the members of his staff.

Later on the other hunters returned, and they had a lot of game, consisting of dozens of rabbits, squirrels, many wild turkeys, etc., but not one of the other three had bagged a deer or bear, and Fritz especially was happy, for he could brag about having killed a bear. He took a delight in crowing over Tim Murphy, who, not knowing but what Fritz had really killed the bear, whose hide was tacked up against the wall of the cabin as a trophy, could not say anything, and had to listen without dispute to the boasting of the Dutch soldier, who asserted that he had proven himself a greater hunter than Tim.

“Just you wait till we go huntin’ ag’in,” said Tim. “Sure an’ it’s mesilf will kill more game than phwat yez do, Dootchy, or Oi’ll know the reason why.”

“Vell, I bet dot I vos kill more as vot you do, Tim Murphies,” retorted Fritz. “I am ein goot hunter, yah, und der iss no vun in der camp dot gan beat me, unless id vos been Dick. Shoost remember dot, Tim Murphies.”

CHAPTER V

A VISIT HOME

AS the river was not yet frozen solid enough to hold anyone up, the British could not get across to attack the patriots, who were thus temporarily secure. The Delaware ran so swiftly that it would not freeze over unless the weather were extremely cold. So all the patriot soldiers had to do was to hunt and forage, and sit in their log cabins and do their best to be comfortable.

Dick and Tom Dare and Ben Foster had something in view, however, other than this. They wished to go to their homes, which were over in New Jersey, about three miles, as we know, east of Philadelphia, and see their folks, and on being urged to do so by Tom and Ben, Dick went to General Washington and asked permission to make the visit to their home.

The commander-in-chief listened attentively, a thoughtful look on his face.

"So your home is not far from here, eh,

Dick?" he remarked, when the youth had finished.

"About twelve miles, I should judge, your excellency."

"I remember, now, that you stated when you joined the army in New York that your home was over in New Jersey."

"Yes, sir."

The commander-in-chief was silent a few minutes, and then said, slowly and thoughtfully: "I was thinking, Dick, that if you go over there, you might be able to keep your eyes on the British. Do you think you could?"

"I could try, at any rate, sir," was the reply.

"True. Well, I am going to grant you three young men leave of absence, to visit your homes over in New Jersey, and I am going to suggest that if, while you are over there on the same side of the river as the British, you can do a little spying and learn anything regarding their intentions, the work will be appreciated."

"We will keep that in mind, your excellency," said Dick, eagerly. "We may be able to learn something that will be of interest or value to you."

"I hope so, my boy."

Then he gave Dick a few general instructions

as to his wishes, and the youth saluted and withdrew.

"What did he say?" queried Tom, eagerly, when Dick entered their cabin.

"That we can go and visit our folks," was the reply.

"Hurrah!" cried Tom. "That is fine, eh, Ben?"

"Yes, indeed," from Ben. "When shall we start, Dick?"

"This evening."

"Why not right away?" queried Tom, who was eager to be off.

"Because, we might be seen by scouts from the British forces on the other side of the river and captured. We must wait till after nightfall."

"That's right," nodded Ben. "We don't want to run any risk of being captured."

"Sure an' phwat wull we do widout you byes here to make t'ings loively, Oi dunno?" remarked Tim, sadly. "It's lonesome we'll be, an' thot's a fact."

"Yah, ve vill be lonesomeness alretty," said Fritz.

"Oh, you and Tim can go hunting," said Tom, grinning. "You haven't settled it as to which is the better hunter yet, you know."

"Yah, dot iss settled alretty," said Fritz. "I killed ein bear, und Tim Murphies has not killed anyding bigger as a turkey. So I am der best hunter, yah."

"Go on wid yez, Dootchy," said Tim, with a lofty air. "It's mesilf doesn't b'lave ye killed thot bear at all, at all. Oi'm bettin' thot Dick shot it fur yez."

"I killed dot bear, meinsellufs," declared Fritz. "I made it too dead to skin, yah."

"But yez skinned it, just the same," grinned Tim. "An' yez are afther bein' stingy wid it, too, slapin' undther it all by yersilf an' not lettin' innywan share its warmth."

"Say, Tim, you and Fritz come along with us," invited Dick. "Our folks will be glad to welcome a couple of our soldier comrades."

But the two demurred at once.

"They wouldn't want us around whin ye boys wur there," said Tim. "Yez are goin' home on a visit, an' they wull want ye all to themsilves."

"Yah, dot iss so," from Fritz. "Ve are much obligationness to you for der invitations, though, Dick."

"Sure an' we are," nodded Tim. "It's much obliged we are afther bein'. But Fritz an' mesilf wull get along all roight here, huntin' an' —"

"Quarreling," grinned Tom.

"Sure," laughed Tim. "We would die of lonesomeness if we didn't liven things up by quarrelin' a bit, Fritz an' meself."

They talked quite a while, and when supper time came, they cooked and ate, after which Dick, Tom and Ben made their preparations, bade good-bye to their comrades, and took their departure.

They went to the river, and choosing a small boat, got in and started across. There was a thin covering of ice near the edge of the stream, but out a hundred yards from the shore there was nothing but water, so they did not have much difficulty in getting across the river.

They approached the east shore slowly and cautiously, for they did not know but there might be British scouts along the river. They reached the shore and made a landing, however, without having heard anything to indicate the presence of any of the redcoats, and having pulled the boat a short distance up a little creek and tied the painter to a tree, they set out in the direction of their homes.

It was quite a walk, but they arrived at their destination in about three hours, and found their folks all at the Foster home, as Mrs. Dare and Mary were over there spending the evening.

The youths had slipped up and looked in at the window, the Foster home being the first for them to reach, coming from the direction they did, and on seeing all the folks there, the three opened the door and quietly walked in, taking their folks by surprise.

Instantly all was excitement, and the three young patriots were given a welcome that was certainly sufficient to prove to them that they were deeply loved. And when the women and girls had got through hugging and kissing the three youths, Mr. Foster shook hands with them, and asked how they happened to be there.

"We got leave of absence granted us by General Washington," said Dick. "I suppose, of course, that you know we are quartered across the Delaware from Trenton?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Well, there is nothing to do in camp, except to hunt and forage for provisions, and so the commander-in-chief was willing to let us come home on a visit."

"That was kind of him."

"Yes, and may heaven bless him!" said Mrs. Dare fervently, and she gazed lovingly and proudly at her handsome, manly young soldier sons.

Mrs. Foster, too, gazed admiringly and lovingly at her son, and she noted that he had a manly bearing, carried himself with a confidence that he had not possessed before joining the patriot army.

"Being a soldier is fast developing him into a man," was her thought. "Well, I am glad of it."

Mary Dare, and Elsie and Lucy Foster were happy also. They looked approvingly at the three bronzed soldier boys, and could hardly bring themselves to a realization of the fact that these were the boys that had only a few months before been here at their homes, doing nothing more exciting than work in the fields.

There was only one drawback to the happiness of the little party, and that was the absence of Mr. Dare, the noble-hearted patriot who had, one evening, immediately after the Declaration of Independence, been called out of his house, after dark, by a Tory neighbor, one Abe Boggs, and had been made a prisoner by Boggs and a number of his Tory friends. He had been turned over to a British force not far distant and put in charge of an officer, to be held as a prisoner of war. He had been taken to New York, where he had been placed in a building that had been used as a sugar-house before the beginning of the war,

but was now used as a jail. Dick had seen his father, there, once, when in New York City on a spying expedition, but only the once, and when his mother now inquired regarding her husband, Dick could only tell her that he knew no more regarding the situation of his father than when he had seen him in the prison in New York, when Tom had been sent home to tell Mrs. Dare and Mary about the matter.

"Surely they would not — injure — Henry," said Mrs. Dare, looking at Dick searchingly. "You have been in the army several months, Dick," she went on, "and should know something about such matters. Do they — ever — shoot prisoners, my son?"

"No, mother — not ordinary prisoners of war, like father," was the reply. "They shoot spies, when caught, but not ordinary prisoners."

"I am glad to hear that," with a sigh of relief. "I have worried, Dick, for fear they might do your father some harm."

"They won't do that, mother, for he is not a spy, you know. So don't worry about that any more."

"I won't, Dick. 'Ah, how I wish that your father could be rescued!'"

Dick nodded, a thoughtful look in his eyes.

"I have thought of that matter a good deal, mother," he said, "and if we had not been driven away from the vicinity of New York, we would have made an attempt to rescue him. Even as it is —" He paused and looked thoughtfully at the wall.

"Even as it is, son!" said his mother, softly, after a few moments, her voice trembling with eagerness and feeling. "Oh, could you not go to New York, even now, and try to rescue your father?"

"I don't know, mother," was the slow reply. "I'll think about it."

Then they dismissed the subject for the present, and entered into conversation with the rest, and after a while, after much urging by all, Dick told about the adventures he had gone through with while spying on the British on Long Island and in New York City.

Dick made the stories as tame as possible, describing the experiences that he had encountered as being less dangerous than they really had been, but his hearers could see that he had taken big chances and that he had been in great peril, for as he had himself said, had he been captured, while playing the part of a spy, he would have been shot.

"Oh, I wish that you would not do spy work, son!" said Mrs. Dare, when the youth had finished his story. "I am afraid that you may be captured, and then that would be terrible."

"Oh, I am careful, mother," was the reply. "I am not much afraid of being captured, and I delight in doing such important work. I am proud, mother, that General Washington has such confidence in me that he gives me the spywork to do. It is a great honor, I think."

"So it is, my son," agreed his mother. "But it would be terrible if I were to lose you, Dick, dear."

"I only wish that General Washington would send me to do spywork," said Tom, his eyes shining. "I would like it."

"Oh, you are too impulsive and reckless to do spywork, Tom," said his sister Mary.

"I'd like spywork, too," said Ben, "but I don't think Tom or myself would be so successful as Dick."

"Oh, I guess either of you would do well enough as a spy," said Dick, who was modest and did not like to pose as being better-fitted for dangerous work than his brother or comrade.

But Ben shook his head. "We know our qualifications and yours," he remarked, "and you are

better equipped for that kind of work. I think the commander-in-chief shows good judgment in selecting Dick."

Thus the conversation ran on, the little party enjoying itself greatly. It was indeed a happy gathering.

Mr. Foster inquired regarding the strength of the patriot army, and Dick, knowing that even though he were a loyalist, he would not carry to the British any information that might be vouchsafed, told the truth regarding the strength, or rather, weakness, of the patriot army, and Mr. Foster shook his head and looked sober and thoughtful.

"I am in favor of the king," he said, slowly, "but I can say that, looking at the matter from your side, it certainly looks dubious. I am of the opinion that the war is practically ended, and that as soon as the Delaware River freezes over, so the British can cross, they will do so and capture or annihilate the patriot force—it is hardly large enough to be called an army."

"I hope that something may turn up to make it possible for General Washington to continue the war," said Dick. "And," he went on, enthusiastically, "if anybody in the world could do

anything to give the patriots half a chance of winning their independence, it is General Washington. He is a great man and a great general."

"Yes, I believe you are right about that, Dick," agreed Mr. Foster. "General Washington has performed some wonderful feats of generalship in the past few months. He is a wonderful man."

"So he is, sir," agreed Dick. Then he happened to glance at the window, and an exclamation escaped his lips. "Look!" he cried, pointing toward the window.

All looked in the direction indicated, quickly, and saw a human face pressed against the window-pane. Eager, malicious and vindictive eyes were glaring in upon them.

"Zeke Boggs!" burst simultaneously from the lips of several of the inmates of the room.

CHAPTER VI

ZEKE'S REVENGE

INSTANTLY Dick leaped up and dashing to the door, threw it open and sprang out into the yard. As he did so, he saw a form running across the yard swiftly, and he dashed in pursuit.

Dick had not stopped to think what he would do with Zeke Boggs, if he succeeded in catching him. He was simply angry because the Tory youth had had the audacity to come and peer in at the window, to spy on the folks in this manner.

“Stop!” called Dick, sternly. “Stop, or it will be the worse for you.”

Evidently Zeke did not think so, however, for he did not stop. Instead, he ran faster than ever, if that were possible. He reached the fence and began scrambling over it with all the haste possible. In his excitement, however, his foot slipped, and he fell to his knees, and by the time he had

gotten to his feet again, Dick had hold of him.

Thump, thump! Dick dealt the youth a couple of blows, and then as his captive cried, "Ouch! Don' do thet, Dick Dare," the patriot youth stayed his hand. At this moment, too, Tom and Ben, with Mr. Foster following, came up.

"You got him, eh, Dick?" exclaimed Ben.
"That's good."

"Thump him, Dick!" from Tom.

"I gave him a couple of thumps," said Dick.
"I guess I'll ask him a few questions."

"Ye better lemme go," said Zeke, sullenly.

Dick shook him. "You had better explain what you mean by coming around and peering in at people's windows," said Dick, sternly.

"I—I—happened to be passin', an'—an' I—jest thought I'd look in," stammered Zeke.

"That's too thin a yarn, Zeke," said Tom.
"What are you doing around here, anyhow?"

"The same thing ye air doin', I reckon," was the sullen reply.

"Visiting your folks, eh?" remarked Dick.

"Yes."

"Is Lem at home, too?" queried Ben.

"Yes, he come with me."

"When did you come?" queried Dick.

"This mornin'."

"Where from?"

"From Trenton."

"Ah!" murmured Dick. "So you're stationed there now, eh?"

"Yes."

"How strong an army is there?" asked Dick.

"Oh, a mighty strong one," was the reply, after a brief hesitation. There was a cunning intonation to his voice that did not escape Dick.

"How many men?" queried the patriot youth.

"Oh, I dunno," hesitatingly. "Ye wouldn't want me ter tell, ennyhow."

"You mean that you don't want to tell," said Dick. "I want you to tell me, and you had better do so, too, or I'll give you the worst thumping you ever had in your life."

"I don' know how many men there are there, Dick, really I don'," replied Zeke, in a whining voice. "There must be several thousan', though, at least."

"About how many thousand?"

"I — I — can't say, Dick. Eight or ten, mebbby."

"I don't believe it. There are not half that many there."

"Yes there is, really," Zeke asserted. Doubtless he knew that Dick had no knowledge to the contrary, and felt that he could safely adhere to the statement.

"Oh, well, if there are eight or ten thousand, our ten thousand soldiers can thrash them good, if they venture across the Delaware, Dick," said Tom, in a confident voice.

"Ye hain't got no ten thousan' soldiers!" cried Zeke. "Ye know ye hain't. W'y, a spy thet Gin'ral Rahl sent acrost the river said as how ye hain't got much more'n three er four thousan' soldiers, an' thet lots uv them air sick, an' couldn't fight."

"Well, that spy didn't know what he was talking about," said Dick. "We have nearly ten thousand men, and expect to keep getting recruits all the time."

"And we'll thrash your army, if you venture across the river, Zeke," said Ben.

"Bah, we hain't afeerd uv ye," said Zeke. "As soon as the river freezes over, we'll come acrost an' finish ye up."

"We'll risk it, Zeke," said Dick. And then he went on. "Will you behave yourself if I let you go, now?"

"If ye mean, will I stay erway frum yer houses, w'y, I'll say yes," was the reply. "I jest happened ter be passin', as I said, an' hearin' voices an' laughin', I jest peeked in ter see who was there."

"You have just as hard work as ever to tell the truth, Zeke," said Tom, scathingly.

"Thet's ther truth," declared Zeke, in a whining voice.

"Oh, well, we'll let it go at that — this time," said Dick. "But, don't let us catch you fooling around again, Zeke. If we do, it'll go hard with you."

"Oh, I won't come aroun' ag'in. Don't ye worry about thet."

"Are there any British soldiers in this vicinity?" queried Dick.

"None nearer than Trenton, I guess," was the reply.

"All right. You may go, now, Zeke — but don't forget what I have told you."

"I'll remember."

Dick let go of Zeke's collar, and he climbed the fence and hastened away in the direction of his home.

"There goes a sneak, if ever there was one," said Ben.

"He's rather on that order," agreed Dick.

"He tried to scare us by telling that there were eight or ten thousand soldiers in Trenton," said Tom, "and I guess we gave him something to think about when we told him that we had nearly ten thousand soldiers over in our encampment."

The four laughed at this, and then returned to the house, and told the story of their capture of, and interview with Zeke Boggs.

"I thought I saw Zeke over in the yard, to-day," said Elsie Foster.

"I saw somebody in the yard over at Hicks' that looked like Lem, too," said Mary Dare.

"Yes, they're both here," said Dick.

"Do you suppose that they can do us, or you boys, any harm?" queried Mrs. Dare, an anxious look on her face.

"Oh, no, mother," replied Dick. "Don't you worry about anything like that."

"Very well, I won't Dick. But you know, they are members of the British army now, and might think it would be a big feather in their caps if they could cause your capture."

"I don't think they'll try any such thing as that, mother."

Then the matter was dismissed from their minds, and they talked about affairs that were of

more interest to them. They had not seen one another for so long that they did not feel like going to bed. They would rather sit up and talk.

So the hours rolled away, and still they sat talking and laughing, and it was a most enjoyable evening that was spent by the members of the two households.

It was after midnight when Mrs. Dare finally said that they had better go over home and get some sleep, and Dick, Tom and Mary were getting up to accompany her, when there came a knock on the door.

All started and glanced at one another wonderingly and questioningly. On the faces of the women and girls was a look of half-fear. Mr. Foster rose and started toward the door, at the same time calling out: "Who is there?"

The only reply was another knock on the door, and the demand, in a hoarse voice: "Open the door!"

Mr. Foster had reached the door, and he hesitated a few moments, and then lifted the bar and opened the door—to find himself confronted by a party of half a dozen British soldiers, at whose head was a lieutenant. At one side, grinning with satisfaction and delight, stood Zeke Boggs and Lem Hicks.

The lieutenant and his men strode past Mr. Foster into the room, and approached Dick, Tom and Ben, who were regarding the intruders with dismay. The women and girls gave utterance to little cries of distress and fear.

Zeke Boggs and Lem Hicks, advanced to the threshold and stood looking in through the open doorway, grinning at the three patriot youths triumphantly.

"I arrest you three rebels, in the name of the king!" said the lieutenant, sternly. "Don't try to escape or offer resistance, or it will be the worse for you."

"This is the work of Zeke and Lem!" cried Tom, giving the two Tory youths a fierce look.

"Ye're right about thet, Tom," replied Zeke. "Whut do ye take me fur, anyhow? Do ye s'pose I'd let myself be thumped by Dick, an' talked to impudently by ther rest uv ye an' not try to get even? I know better than thet. I made up my mind that I'd get even with ye, an' so I rode over to Burlington an' got these soldiers, an' now ye'll be took prisoners an' kep' in jail, ef they don' hang ye."

"We'll settle with you for that, Zeke!" said Ben. "You will see the day when you'll wish that you hadn't played us this trick."

"Mebby so," grinning. "But I guess ye'll wish first, thet ye hadn't played me the trick ye did, to-night."

Mr. Foster now confronted the lieutenant. "Officer," he said, with as pleasant an air as he could assume, "these young men are here on a visit to their folks. One is my own son, and the other two are the sons of my neighbor, there, Mrs. Dare. The boys have come home for a brief visit, and they should not be molested, as there is a temporary cessation of hostilities between the British and patriot armies."

"The only reason of the cessation of hostilities is because we can't get across the river and at the rebels," was the lieutenant's reply. "We have come for the rebels, and will take them, sir."

"But, I am a loyal king's man, lieutenant," insisted Mr. Foster, "and that fact should have some weight. These young men are my guests, and as I said, one is my son."

"I can't help that, sir," replied the lieutenant, "I was sent to take the three rebels prisoners and conduct them to Burlington, and I must do it. I'm glad you are a loyal king's man, but they are rebel soldiers, and must go with us. Get ready at once, young men."

"Oh, sir, don't take them!" cried Mrs. Dare, tears streaming down her cheeks. "My husband is already a prisoner in the hands of the British, and I pray you not to take my sons also."

The lieutenant shook his head. "I can't help it if your husband is a prisoner in the hands of our army, lady," he said. "I was sent here to get these three rebel soldiers, and must take them. It is useless to try to talk me out of it."

"He is right, mother," said Dick, quietly. "He could not do otherwise. Don't worry, mother," he whispered. "We will not be in their hands long."

"That's the way to look at the matter," said the lieutenant approvingly. "You are a sensible young man. Get ready as soon as possible. We want to get back and get some sleep before morning."

Dick, Tom, and Ben, kissed their mothers and the girls, shook hands with Mr. Foster. Then the redcoats bound their hands together behind their backs, and conducted them from the house, to the road, where horses were hitched. The prisoners were assisted into saddles, and then the soldiers mounted, and the little party set out toward the west, the youths calling out good-bye as cheerily as possible, and the women and girls

and Mr. Foster responding, though in anything but cheerful voices.

Zeke and Lem, having remained to see the three youths they hated, start away in the company of the redcoats, now hastened off in the direction of their homes.

“Oh, you sneaks!” cried Elsie Foster, who was a brave, spirited girl. “You had better go home, I think! If I had a gun, I do believe I’d shoot you!”

A sneering laugh from the two Tory youths was the only reply.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Foster, Mrs. Dare and the girls entered the house, and sat down and talked of the sad affair for some time, while Dick, Tom and Ben, silent and heavy-hearted, rode onward toward the British encampment in the midst of their redcoat captors.

CHAPTER VII

SENTENCED AS A SPY

THE three patriot youths were taken to Burlington, were placed in a room of a house there, and guarded till morning. Then, after having been questioned a while by an officer, they were taken to Trenton and placed in jail.

Tom and Ben were placed in one room together, but Dick was put in a room by himself. This was done because of the fact that Dick was known to be a patriot spy, and it was not intended that he should have even the pleasure of his comrades' companionship.

For the first time since joining the patriot army Dick Dare was an occupant of a British prison. Naturally he did not like his situation. It was indeed anything but pleasing. He wished that he might escape, but how he was to accomplish this was more than he could say, for the jail was the regular one of the town, and was strong.

However, Dick was stout-hearted and did not

despair. He would wait patiently, watch for an opportunity, and if one presented itself, would make an effort to get away.

That afternoon Dick was taken before a party of British officers from Burlington and Trenton, and he guessed at once, after a glance at their stern countenances, that there was something serious afoot. He did not try to guess what it was, as he knew they would soon tell him why he had been conducted to their presence.

General Percy was the presiding officer, and he at once proceeded to question Dick.

"Your name is Dick Dare, I believe," he said.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick.

"You are a member of the rebel army."

"I am a member of the patriot army, sir," quietly, and with emphasis on patriot.

"Exactly. We call you rebels, as indeed you are. You are rebelling against your lawful king."

"We acknowledge no king, sir," said Dick firmly.

"Oh, well, no matter. You are a rebel soldier, and we have you here a prisoner. You will answer the questions that I shall put to you."

"That depends," was the quiet reply.

"Depends, on what?"

"On what the questions are."

"You mean by that —" frowning.

"I mean that I will answer no questions as to the strength of our army — questions that would be injurious to our cause."

Again the general frowned.

"Don't be hasty," he advised. "I must tell you, Dick Dare, that it is known to us that you have been at various times engaged in the work of spying on our army, have been within our lines seeking information regarding our numbers, the times when we intended making attacks, and so forth. This is serious business, and as you may have heard, it is customary when a spy is captured, to put him to death. And that is what may happen to you, unless you give us all the information that you have in your possession."

Dick made no reply, and presently the general went on:

"You do not deny having acted as a spy on various occasions?"

"I have done spywork on two or three occasions," was the reply.

"Exactly. And now, you had better answer my questions. How many men are there in your army?"

Dick shook his head. "I don't know the exact

number, sir," he said. "And if I did, I would not tell you."

"Many of them are ill, are they not?"

"I will answer no questions that have reference to our army," said Dick, firmly.

"You had better," said Colonel Rahl.

"Yes, so you had," nodded the general. "Mind, I do not say positively that we will spare your life, even if you do answer our questions, but if you refuse to do so, we certainly shall have you executed."

This did not make any impression on Dick. "I will not answer your questions," he said. "If you wish information regarding our army, send spies over there, the same as General Washington does when he wishes information."

"We will do that, too," with a grim smile. "In fact, we have already done so, and we happen to know that you have a mere handful of men, and that a large number of those are so sick they could not hold a musket, if a battle were to take place."

Dick put as much scorn and derision into a smile as possible, and said: "Your spy must have done his spying from this side of the river. If he had gotten close enough, he would have seen

differently, and would have had a different report to make."

"Humph," said General Percy. "Then you claim that you have a strong force, and that they are in condition to offer battle, if attacked?"

"Yes," said Dick, "I do. I will say that much, anyhow."

The British officers looked at one another, and then shook their heads. It was evident that they did not believe the youth's statement.

"We prefer to take our spy's word," said the general. Then he was silent a few moments, gazing keenly and thoughtfully at Dick, after which he looked around at his fellow officers inquiringly.

"Shall we vote upon the matter of the execution of this spy?" he inquired.

The officers nodded assent, a rather stern expression on their countenances, and Dick realized that his situation was a serious one. He was indeed a spy, was in their hands, and the chances were that the officers would vote to execute him.

The officers procured slips of paper, and proceeded to write something on them. These slips were handed to General Percy, who gravely examined the slips, and then announced, soberly:

"I find that three out of four of you favor execution," he said. "Such being the case, I hereby sentence you, Dick Dare, to death. You will be shot to-morrow evening. I am sorry," he went on, in a somewhat softer voice, "to have to inflict a death-sentence on one so young, but you are a rebel spy, and have, so I understand, been a very successful one, securing valuable information on one or two occasions, and so you are a menace to our success, if permitted to get back to your army. The only thing for me to do, therefore, is to impose the sentence of death."

Dick was pale, but otherwise did not show that he was impressed by the seriousness of his situation. He was quite calm.

"Have you anything to say for yourself, Dick Dare?" the general asked, after a few moments.

"No, sir," was the reply.

"Very well. You will now be conducted back to the jail."

The two soldiers that had brought Dick to the British headquarters conducted him back to the jail, and when the door clanged shut and he was alone in his room, Dick sat down on the cot and gave himself up to thought that was far from pleasing.

He was young. He loved life, and the thought that on the morrow he was to be taken out and shot to death was terrible to contemplate. It hardly seemed possible that he could be threatened by death, but he had heard the general impose the sentence, and he knew enough about army matters to realize that the order would be carried out.

There was only one chance for him, and that was for him to escape. But this was a slim chance indeed. Here he was, alone in a strong room, with a guard in the hall outside. How could he hope to make his escape? He was a sensible youth, and did not delude himself with any idea that this could be accomplished. Of course, he would keep his eyes open, and if an opportunity was to present itself, he would seize it and do his best to escape from jail and the death that threatened, but he feared that no chance would offer itself.

The day was a sad one for Dick. He wished that night would come, so that he could lie down and get to sleep, and then as he thought of what morning would bring, he shuddered and wished that night might never come.

Dick did a lot of thinking, and he decided that

there was only one thing possible that he might do, and that was to overpower the soldier that brought his food at supper time, and then change clothes with him, and walk past the guard in the hall, and get out of doors. It was a very slim chance, but he made up his mind to attempt the feat. He could not be in a worse situation than he already was in, if he failed.

So when evening came, and he heard the soldier unlocking the door, he got ready for the attempt. In order to throw the soldier off his guard, Dick sat on the cot, his head bowed in his hands, seemingly plunged into the depths of despair. As this was the way a prisoner in Dick's situation would most likely act and feel, the soldier was deceived, and so did not exercise as much care as he otherwise might have done, and was so careless as to turn his back to the prisoner, while placing the food on the little table at one side of the room.

This was Dick's opportunity, and he grasped it. Rising, quickly but silently, he stepped forward and seized the soldier by the throat with both hands, and choked him to such an extent that he could not utter a cry. The soldier struggled fiercely, but Dick was an exceptionally strong

youth, and he used every ounce of his strength and compressed the man's windpipe, shutting off the supply of air, and the result was that in a few minutes the redcoat sagged to the floor, limp and unconscious.

Dick rose and stood erect, panting and listening. He feared that the sound of the struggle might have been heard by the guard in the hall. But such did not seem to be the case. All was quiet.

The youth did not know how long it might stay quiet, however, and so proceeded at once to remove the outer clothing from the soldier's form, and then doffed his own coat and trousers and put on the uniform of the redcoat.

He had just finished, when he heard the sound of footsteps in the hall. The guard was approaching!

The door was almost shut, and as nightfall was at hand and the interior of the room was gloomy and almost dark, Dick believed that he could deceive the guard into thinking he was the soldier. He took up his position near the door, and waited.

His heart was beating more rapidly than was its wont. But he stood there, motionless, and

waited, determined to do his best to fool the red-coat guard.

The soldier he had overpowered lay over in the corner, where he could not be seen through the doorway.

When the guard reached the door, he paused and said: "How is the prisoner, this evening?"

"He seems pretty blue," was the reply. Dick had noted the unconscious soldier's voice, and imitated it as well as he could, indeed so perfectly that the guard was deceived.

"I reckon you or I would feel blue, under the same circumstances, eh, comrade?" he said.

"Yes, I think so."

"Right. It certainly is not pleasant to have to contemplate being taken out on the morrow and shot."

"True. That is enough to make anyone feel serious."

"I think so. Is he eating anything?"

"Yes. He seems to still retain his appetite."

"He is sensible, at any rate."

"Yes."

Then the guard paced on down the hall, slowly, and Dick, feeling that this was his best time for leaving the room, stepped out into the

hall, closed the door and locked it, and then walked along the hall in the opposite direction to that taken by the guard.

Dick could only hope for success, and with every nerve tense, he approached the end of the hall, where the outer door was located. Another door led from the hall into the quarters of the jailer, but Dick did not intend to enter there. He would have to leave the hall by way of the main door, if he were to succeed in escaping.

When he reached the door, he found, to his joy, that the key was in the lock. He seized hold of the key, and with a quick glance over his shoulder, noted that the guard was continuing onward toward the farther end of the hall and was not looking back. Then he turned the key in the lock, lifted the great bar from its place, turned the knob and pulled the door open.

And there, right in front of him, evidently just on the point of knocking on the door, stood a British captain. And behind him were half a dozen soldiers.

Dick stood stock-still, staring at the redcoats, a feeling of disappointment and horror holding him as if paralyzed.

CHAPTER VIII

A LIVELY CHASE

“**A**H,” said the captain. “We have come for that young rebel spy, Dick Dare. Where is he?”

Dick’s heart sank even lower on hearing this, and then again a feeling of relief went over him, for the captain’s words showed that he did not suspect that the young seeming British soldier was not what he appeared to be.

“Perhaps I shall be able to escape yet,” was the youth’s thought.

“The rebel spy is in one of the rooms toward the rear end of the hall, sir,” he replied. “You might find the jailer in the room, yonder,” indicating the door to the jailer’s room.

He stepped aside, and the captain and the men entered. As they did so, there suddenly sounded, from down the hall, a loud, but muffled yelling, accompanied by a vigorous thumping on a door.

“What’s that?” cried the captain, in wonder.

"One of the rebel prisoners, likely, sir," replied Dick. But he knew that it was the soldier he had overpowered and changed clothes with. The fellow had recovered consciousness sooner than Dick had reckoned on, and was now clamoring to be let out of the room.

The guard, who was at the farther end of the hall when the yelling and pounding began, turned and came running along the hall, while the captain advanced in that direction.

Dick, feeling that his chances for escaping were diminishing with every moment he remained in the building, stepped out through the open doorway. As he did so, a cry escaped the lips of one of the soldiers. It was one that had eyed Dick rather closely while he was talking to the captain, as Dick remembered.

"Quick, captain!" this soldier yelled, excitedly. "I know this fellow now. It is Dick Dare, dressed in a British uniform! I saw him when he pretended to join the British army several months ago, over on Long Island! Come, quickly, captain, or he will escape!"

The instant he heard these words from the lips of the redcoat, Dick leaped away and ran down the street at the top of his speed. He realized

that if he escaped now, it would have to be by running and dodging his pursuers — for he had gone not more than fifty yards when the redcoats came tumbling out through the doorway of the jail.

They caught sight of Dick's fleeing form, and gave utterance to excited cries.

"Stop!" yelled the captain. "Halt, and surrender, rebel! You cannot escape!"

But Dick thought otherwise. He made up his mind that at any rate he would not halt and surrender. If they recaptured him, it would be only after he had exhausted himself in an effort to escape.

So onward he ran at the top of his speed, and after him came the redcoats.

"Stop, or we'll fire!" yelled the captain. "You shall not escape us, and if you won't stop at my command, we'll see what effect bullets will have on you."

Dick realized that he was in great danger of being shot down. He knew they would not hesitate to fire, for he was known to be a spy, and had been sentenced to be shot the following evening, anyway. It would simply be hurrying matters a little, if he were shot now. But even with

this realization upon him, Dick did not halt or slacken his speed. He would take a chance of being missed by the bullets, and he believed that he might succeed in escaping, if not hit, for he did not doubt that he was speedier and had better wind and staying qualities than these soldiers of the king, who were used to heavy eating, and not used to taking much exercise.

So he continued to run at the top of his speed, and a quick glance backward over his shoulder showed him that he had gained slightly. He was glad to see this, and did not doubt that he would be able to rapidly widen the distance between himself and his pursuers if he were not wounded by a bullet.

“Stop!” again came to his hearing in the captain’s voice. “I shall not call to you again, and if you do not obey me and halt instantly, I will give the order to my men to fire!”

Dick paid no attention, of course, but kept right on running. He knew that the dangerous moment was at hand, however, and felt that in another moment he would hear the spiteful crack of the muskets and perhaps feel the bullets tearing their way through his flesh. He set his teeth and redoubled his efforts.

Crack, crack, crack!

The soldiers were firing, and Dick dodged first to the right, then to the left as he heard the bullets sing past him, one cutting its way through his coat-sleeve. He simply compressed his lips and ran onward swiftly.

Crack! Another of his pursuers had fired, and again he heard a bullet sing past. He was not hit, however, and continued to run with all his might. He breathed more freely, too, for he believed that all the soldiers had fired their muskets, and he did not believe that they could reach him with pistol-bullets.

"Stop!" yelled the British captain, in a loud, angry voice. "Halt, you rebel! You are foolish to think you can get away."

"Perhaps I am," thought Dick, "but I'll keep trying, just the same. If you get me, you'll have to run faster than you have been doing, so far."

The shots, however, even though the bullets did not hit Dick, did one thing that was bad for the fugitive, and that was to arouse people in the vicinity and bring them swarming out into the streets, eager to learn what it meant.

As Dick noted this, he almost groaned aloud. He realized that he was now in great danger of

being recaptured. The captain, seeing the people pouring into the streets, yelled loudly to attract their attention, and called upon them to seize the fleeing rebel spy.

Two or three citizens got in front of him, and tried to stop him. They were not very energetic in their efforts, however. Possibly they had not understood the captain's words, or they may have been bothered by the fact that the fugitive wore a British uniform, and hesitated to seize hold of a seeming British soldier. At any rate, Dick dashed right on, shoved them to one side, and managed to get past and continue his flight.

"After him, you fools!" the youth heard the angry captain yell. "Why didn't you hold him? Catch him, I say! Don't let him get away. He's a rebel spy!"

One townsman now started in pursuit of Dick, but he was no more fleet of foot than the soldiers, and Dick gradually drew away. Then too he was between the soldiers and Dick, and so the redcoats, if they had intended doing so, did not dare to fire their pistols, for fear of hitting the citizen.

A large crowd of citizens now appeared in

front of the fugitive, however, and to avoid running right into a party of a score at least, Dick turned down a side-street, and found himself heading toward the river.

It would do no good to go down to the river, however, for there were likely no boats there, and he would be unable to get across the stream.

Other parties of citizens now appeared in front of him, and he again turned a corner, and ran along the street, wondering if it was going to be possible for him to escape. People were beginning to swarm in all the streets in the vicinity, and no matter in which way he went, he would likely encounter them.

Behind him came the yelling crowd, and in front of him he saw another big group of citizens, and Dick was in doubt what to do. He did not believe he could now break through the crowd in front as he might have done if not tired by his long run, nor did he dare stop and turn back. He paused, however, and stood still, hesitating.

At this point the buildings were large ones, for that time, being three stories in height, and they stood flush with the pavement. Dick had paused in front of a door, and suddenly, as he stood there, wondering what he should do, the



A strong hand grasped Dick.

door in question was suddenly pulled open, and an arm shot forth, a strong hand grasped Dick by the collar, and he was unceremoniously jerked through the doorway, into the hall, which was so dark Dick could not see the person who had seized him, and then the door went shut again, and the youth heard a bar drop into place.

CHAPTER IX

THE SEARCH

YELLS went up from the citizens as they saw their intended prey disappear from their sight. They knew he had entered one of the houses, and hastened forward, their eyes on the front of the house, so as not to make any mistake in the building.

They paused in front of the building in question, and some of them tried the door, and found it fastened.

"It's barred," said one.

"The officer and his soldiers will be here directly," said another. "Let us wait and leave the forcing of the door to them. That is a responsibility that we don't need to take."

The citizens seemed to think this a good idea, and so they simply stood there and waited till the British captain and his soldiers arrived.

"Where is the rebel?" cried the captain.
"Where did he go?"

"Into this house," replied one of the citizens.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, we saw him," was the decided answer.

"Then we will have him out of there very quickly," was the grim remark of the captain, and drawing a pistol, he held it by the barrel and pounded on the door loudly with the butt.

He ceased and listened intently, but there was no immediate response.

"Humph!" he growled. Then he beat another loud tattoo on the door with the pistol-butt.

There was silence for a few moments, and then a window was thrown open almost above the heads of the party on the sidewalk, and on looking up, they saw a head protruding through the window.

"Who is there?" called down the owner of the head. "What is wanted? Why are you pounding on my door in that fashion?"

"I am a captain in the king's army," replied the officer. "We were chasing an escaped rebel spy, and he entered your house, and we want you to open the door and permit us to enter."

"There is no rebel spy in my house!" cried the man, in an angry voice.

"But here are a score of loyal citizens that saw him enter your house," persisted the captain. "Am I not right, men?" turning to the citizens in question.

"Yes, yes!" was the reply.

"I tell you there is no rebel spy in my house," again cried the man. "I am Sir Horace Mordaunt, a loyal king's man, and I would as soon cut off my good right arm as assist a rebel to escape."

"Well, you may know nothing about the matter, Sir Horace," said the captain, "but the spy in question entered your house, by way of this door, here. These good men saw him."

"Impossible, I tell you," cried Sir Horace. "There is no rebel in here, for there is no one to admit anybody, but myself, and I did not admit anyone."

"Your servant, Sir—" began the captain, but the man interrupted him.

"My only servant went to stay overnight with a sick relative, and so could not have admitted anyone to my house."

"Well, somebody admitted the spy," declared the captain, stubbornly. "These men saw him enter at this door, and I ask you, Sir Horace, to

open the door and permit us to enter and search the house."

"That would be foolishness and time wasted," said Sir Horace. "You would find nobody. There is some mistake. No spy entered this building. I would be willing to take oath on that."

"Nevertheless I wish to enter and make search," persisted the captain. "Kindly open the door, Sir Horace."

"Well, I'll do it," was the grumbling response, "but it is foolishness, I tell you. No spy could possibly have entered, for I am here alone this evening, and did not admit anyone."

The man withdrew his head and the window went down with a slam, and the captain turned to the citizens and asked them if it were not possible that they were mistaken in the house.

"Possibly it was the one adjoining that the spy entered," he said.

But the citizens insisted that such was not the case. They had kept their eyes on the house, and on the door, they declared, and there could be no mistake. This was the house, and the spy had disappeared through the very doorway in front of which they now stood.

"Very well," said the officer. "Since you are so certain of this, we will search the house. But, I know that Sir Horace Mordaunt is a loyal king's man and a truthful and reliable man, and so do not doubt his statement that he did not admit anyone. And such being the case, who did it?"

The citizens shook their heads and said they did not know. It was indeed a puzzle.

Sir Horace presently opened the door, and the captain and the soldiers entered. The citizens stayed outside, as there was no need of their assistance in searching the house. They remained, however, as they were eager to learn whether the spy were found.

"Search the house, since nothing else will do you, Sir Captain," said Sir Horace. "But do it as expeditiously as possible, for I don't want to be kept up here any longer than is absolutely necessary."

"It won't take us long to search the house, sir," replied the captain. "Just furnish us with some candles, and we will get to work."

"There are plenty of candles," indicating a shelf against the wall of the hall.

The captain and each of the soldiers lighted a

candle, and then they set about making a thorough search of the house. They distributed themselves on the different floors and in the basement, and looked everywhere, even in the attic-store-room, but without success. They could find no signs of the spy, and when they had finished, they returned to the front hall, where Sir Horace was in waiting.

"You did not find anyone," said Sir Horace. "I knew you would not. The men who said they saw the rebel spy enter here must have been mistaken."

"So it would seem, sir," replied the captain. "But they were positive this was the house he entered."

"Well, you have proven that he is not here, captain, so if you will kindly withdraw, I will return to my room and to bed."

"We will go at once, sir. Sorry to have disturbed you. Good-night, Sir Horace."

"Good-night."

They stepped out upon the sidewalk, and the owner of the house closed and barred the door.

"He wasn't in there, sir, after all, then?" remarked a citizen in a puzzled and disappointed voice.

"No. You must have been mistaken in the building that the spy entered."

"Impossible," was the decided reply. "He entered this building, for I saw him with my own eyes. The only question is, who admitted him, and what became of him after he entered?"

"That is indeed the question," replied the captain. "Well, we can do no more to-night. The spy has slipped through our fingers, and the only thing for me to do, so far as I can see, is to return to headquarters and make my report to that effect. Come, men," and the captain strode away, up the street, followed by the half dozen soldiers, while the citizens dispersed to their homes, discussing the matter of the mysterious disappearance of the rebel spy, and trying to figure out what had become of him.

When the captain reached headquarters and reported the affair to General Percy and the other officers, who were gathered there, awaiting his return with the patriot youth, the officers stared at one another in amazement and dismay.

"So Dick Dare, the rebel spy, has escaped!" exclaimed General Percy. "That is bad. But, he is still in Trenton. Captain Marks, to you I depute the task of seeing to it that he does not

escape from the town. Get out a hundred men, two or three hundred, if necessary, and have all the streets patrolled and all the outlets of the town guarded, so that if the spy tries to slip out and away, he will be discovered and recaptured. Attend to this matter at once."

"I will do so, sir," replied the captain, and saluting he withdrew, and hastened to execute the order of his superior officer.

An hour later every street in the town was being patrolled by British soldiers, and every outlet was being guarded. It would be a difficult matter indeed for Dick Dare to leave the town without being seen and recaptured.

CHAPTER X

THE PRISONERS

THERE was naturally commotion in the jail upon the escape of Dick, and when the knowledge of the facts came to them, Tom and Ben were stimulated to a like endeavor. Their circumstances were different however. In the first place the room they occupied was near the turnkey's own quarters. The fact that Ben was the son of a royalist doubtless secured for him better accommodations than had been accorded the escaped prisoner.

Now, that Dick had gotten away, however, methods in the jail, were somewhat changed. A servant brought in the food at meal times, but a soldier stood observant at the door. Any effort to overcome the guard would have been absurd, and the idea was not even discussed by the boys during the day that followed.

"Let's try the window during the night," suggested Tom.

"I have already tested it," admitted Ben, "but I feel certain that the iron bars are too secure."

"There is the chimney," mused Tom.

An inspection, however, offered no hope in that direction. The room was heated, that is, one might better say, the chill was taken off, by a drum-head stove. Mayhap some of my readers have never seen a heating apparatus of this nature. I will describe it therefore. Directly underneath the room occupied by the youths was the kitchen, and the pipe from the cooking stove ran through the boy's room. Just above the floor was the drum-head. It was merely an enlarged section of the pipe, with the insides so arranged as to delay the passing of the smoke, and abstract from it a share of its heat. The pipe then ran at right angles to the chimney.

"I have an idea," Tom whispered, for it is said that even walls have ears, and all of their talk was carried on in an undertone.

"What is it?"

Tom did not answer, but pointed to the drum-head. At the point, just beneath where it stood, there had evidently been made an opening, per-

haps eighteen inches, or more, in diameter. Over this was placed a board, through which was a round hole, to admit the pipe.

The possibility of escape grasped the minds of both boys, and an effort in that direction was agreed upon for that very evening.

Tom examined carefully the jointed connections of the pipe, and found it possible to detach the drum-head from the length directly below. In doing this he made a little noise, but Ben was wrapping the drum-head with his knuckles, and the guard doubtless thought that the two boys were amusing themselves. Tom was able to slip in place a thin section of a shingle, so that later he could readily extract the same, move the drum-head to one side, and disclose the opening to the room below.

It would not be practical to even investigate further until the fire in the kitchen stove was banked for the night, the room below was itself deserted, and the inmates of the building were asleep.

It seemed like an interminable long day, although one of the shortest of the year, but they were braced up by the increasing certainty that Dick had made good his escape. They would have known, at once, had he been recaptured

and brought back to the prison. They only feared, knowing how intrepid and fearless Dick was, that he might have been wounded or even killed.

It was well on to ten o'clock, when the boys thought it well to move. All was quiet in the house except for the heavy breathing of the sound sleepers.

"It's time we were starting," whispered Tom.

"I am ready."

Carefully they displaced the drum-head. Then both took a firm hold upon the projecting pipe, and, after working it loose from the stove, they pulled the long section up into their room. The board was removed, and an opening sufficiently large for them to drop through could be made out. But where in the dark below will they land? It was a chance, and the allurements of freedom led them on. Ben, being the taller, went first through the aperture. Tom held the other's wrists, and by stretching down full length hoped to hear that Ben's feet could touch the floor. He was hanging, however, in midair, and so reported in a whisper.

"Let go now, and I will drop," was Ben's order.

The distance, it so chanced, was not a half

foot, but the article close by, upon which he alighted was the spout of the tea kettle, and there was a clatter of pans and tins sufficient to wake the household. Both believed that they would be detected, and from an adjacent room, a voice was heard, growling, "There's those pesky rats again."

After an interval Tom followed Ben through the hole, and this time the first adventurer caught his comrade in his strong arms, and no noise was made.

"Now, to find an exit," whispered Tom.

They knew, in a general way, in which direction lay the hall, and thither proceeded. The door was easily unlatched, and guided solely by the sense of touch, it was as dark as pitch, they traversed a considerable space to the rear door. It was locked and barred, and the key was not in place.

There was a room at their right, which, from the odor of apples, potatoes, and other food products they later made out to be a storeroom. Oddly enough they found that the door was open. They entered, and just sufficient light came through the high placed window to disclose, standing close to the opening itself, the form of a man.

It was too late to retreat now, for the figure had dropped to the floor in a crouching position, as if ready to spring upon them.

It was a trying situation, there in the dark, and quite enough to test the nerve of the most stout hearted, but they were a brave pair, and only hesitated, that they might gain some advantage in the impending contest. At least they were two to one. No one of the three moved a muscle for a full minute, and a minute under such circumstances seems a long time.

In the minds of Tom and Ben came the thought that it was most strange that there was no call for help, and they were still mentally debating this peculiar circumstance, when they were stirred to activity.

The crouching figure sprang from his squat position, and without a word grasped his nearest opponent, which chanced to be Tom. There was a tussle, and what the outcome might have been, even with Ben's interference, cannot be told, for the noise of the struggle rang through the building, and, in less time than takes the telling, the guards were heard running down the hall, the keeper following with a light.

The scene disclosed to the new arrivals was a surprising one, and, for the moment to them,

quite unexplainable. Tom's antagonist had been secured now and his arms pinioned. He was, it turned out, a prisoner in the jail, a man of ugly, forbidding mien, accused of the heinous crime of murder. He had, by cunning and continuous effort, succeeded that very evening in escaping from his cell, and doubtless, but for the chance venture of attempted flight by our two heroes on the very same night, would have gotten away.

As it was, all three were returned to their respective quarters, and this time made secure. The drum-head stove was so fastened in place that it could not be again removed. The commandant was not severe in the case of the boys, the fact that they had been instrumental, however, unwittingly, in the recapture of the dangerous prisoner had won his favor. They, however, were naturally much downcast by the failure of their effort to escape.

CHAPTER XI

A FRIEND

TO say that Dick Dare was surprised at being seized and pulled so unceremoniously into the building is stating the matter mildly. He was indeed amazed, and wondered who the person could be. It was dark in the hall, however, and he could not even see what the person looked like.

“Come,” said a voice, and then Dick felt a strong hand grip his hand, and he was drawn along the hall, till, he judged, they were at the rear of the house. Then he heard a door open, and he was pulled across a threshold, into a room, which he guessed was the kitchen. Across this they went, and Dick heard another door open, and the next moment he was descending a flight of steps, which led, he guessed, into the cellar.

They made their way across the cellar, and Dick heard his conductor fumbling, after which there was a creaking sound, and then a section of

the wall of the cellar swung back, revealing another cellar on the other side of the opening, this cellar being lighted by a candle sitting on a box.

The person who had taken hold of Dick so unceremoniously was now revealed to view, and Dick noted that he was a man of perhaps forty years, with kindly expression, and gray hair and beard.

Drawing Dick through into the other cellar, the man closed the section of the wall, and drew a breath of relief.

"You are safe now, young man," he said, in a kindly voice.

"Thanks to you, sir," replied Dick.

"I heard the noise of the men in pursuit of you," said the man, and opened my door and looked out and saw you coming. But, not wishing to draw attention to my house and cause it to be searched, I hastened into my neighbor's cellar, upstairs and to his front-door and opened it just as you reached it and stopped, not knowing which way to turn, and as there was no time for explanations, I hauled you in and conducted you hither."

"And I thank you, very much, for having done so, sir," said Dick.

"My name is James Hogan," said the man, "and yours?"

"Dick Dare, sir."

The man started and uttered an exclamation. "Then you are the patriot spy that was in jail, under sentence of death!"

"Yes, sir."

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Dick Dare," was the hearty assertion of the man. "I am a patriot, and was sorry when I heard about the danger that threatened you, whom I knew to be a valuable spy. I did not think of your making your escape. How did you manage it?"

Dick told him the story, briefly, and Mr. Hogan nodded approvingly and uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"You did well to make your escape," he said. "They would have shot you, as they said they would do, if you had not got away. Your youth would not have saved you, for you have done better spywork than the men spies, during the past few months, if I have been informed aright, and were a menace to the success of the British."

"I was so fortunate as to secure some important information regarding the intentions of the

British on two or three occasions," nodded Dick. "And of course, the British did not like that."

"No, indeed. They would have executed you, had you not escaped. And now, the question is, can you succeed in escaping from Trenton? You are out of the jail, but not out of the town."

"You can tell better about that than I can, Mr. Hogan," replied Dick. "You know the town, and the location and number of the troops and I do not."

The man was thoughtful a few moments, and then said: "It is my belief, Dick Dare, that it would be practically impossible for you to succeed in getting safely out of Trenton to-night, for the reason that the soldiers are on the *qui vive*, and will be on the lookout for you. If you tried to slip out and away, they would see you, likely, and recapture you. So in my opinion, the best thing for you to do is to remain here till to-morrow night, and then slip out and leave the town."

"Likely you are right, sir," said Dick. "And, anyway, so long as I am in Trenton already, I do not want to leave until after I have secured some information that will be of value to General Washington. I promised him that I would

try to secure some information regarding the British, and now that I am here with your help I would like to make use of the opportunity."

"That is a good idea, and so far as that is concerned, you will not need to go about the town, investigating, for I can give you all the information necessary. You see, I live here, and know all about the British."

"That is splendid," said Dick. "That will make my venture here profitable, indeed. If you will let me stay here till to-morrow evening, I will be much obliged to you. But it will be dangerous for you, will it not?"

"No, I don't think so. They will hardly suspect me."

"Doubtless you are right. It is more than likely that my pursuers saw me disappear through the doorway of the house adjoining, and they will likely search it, but would not think of my having slipped across to this house."

"That is what I think, Dick. And now, come on upstairs. We will take up our position at the front window, where we can see out upon the street, and will thus gain some idea of what the redcoats and their friends are doing."

Taking up the candle, Mr. Hogan led the way

upstairs, and Dick followed, thanking his lucky stars that he had been enabled through this man's aid to escape from his pursuers.

Leaving the candle in the kitchen, the man led the way out into the hall and along it, to the front of the house. Here he drew Dick into a room, evidently the parlor, and to a window, and on looking out, they saw quite a crowd in front of the adjoining house.

"They saw you enter there," whispered Mr. Hogan.

"I guess you are right, sir," agreed Dick. "They will search the house, undoubtedly."

"Yes, the soldiers are already inside. The crowd is made up wholly of citizens."

"Do you think there is any danger that they will search this house, when they fail to find me in there?"

"I hardly think so, my boy."

"Might they not find the secret door between the two cellars?"

"I don't think they are likely to do that. It fits perfectly."

"How came the secret door to be there?" asked Dick, curiously.

"I don't know. It has been there always, I

guess. Was made, likely, when the houses were built. I discovered it by accident, and I am positive that my neighbor does not know of it."

"Is your neighbor a loyalist?"

"Yes, a strong king's man. His name is Sir Horace Mordaunt, and he has held office here in Trenton, under the king, at various times."

"Does he know that you are a patriot?"

"No. At least, I don't think he does."

"I thought that if he knows you as a patriot, he might suggest to the soldiers that they search your house."

"No, I have never had any words with him, and I have been careful not to express myself in a political way, so I doubt if there is anybody in the town that knows where I stand on the question."

"That is good. In that case, I doubt if he will suggest that your house be searched."

"I do not fear that he will do so."

"Probably the citizens who were chasing me were positive in their statements that I entered the other house, and when they fail to find me in there, they will not know where to look for me."

"That is what I think, Dick."

They remained at the window, watching the

crowd with interest, till the soldiers emerged from the adjoining building, and then they waited, with some anxiety, for the next move. It was possible that the soldiers might decide to search this house, thinking that the citizens might have been mistaken as to which house the fugitive had entered. But, much to the relief of the watchers, the soldiers took their departure, and the citizens dispersed in various directions, and presently the street was deserted and all was quiet.

"I guess that you are safe now, Dick Dare," said Mr. Hogan. "We will go into the library and talk a while — but first, are you hungry?"

"Not very," replied Dick. "I have had no supper, however, as I did not stop to eat, after overpowering the man who brought me my supper in the jail."

"Then come to the kitchen and have something to eat, after which you will feel more like talking."

Mr. Hogan led the way to the kitchen, where he set out food of various kinds, and Dick ate heartily, for his strenuous exercise of the evening had made him hungry. Mr. Hogan explained, as Dick ate, that his family was out in the country, visiting a relative, and thus he was alone.

"So there is plenty of room for you here, my boy," he said in conclusion. "I will give you a change of clothing and I shall be glad of your company till you are ready to make the attempt to escape from the town."

"I will make the attempt to-morrow night," said Dick. "I don't believe they will exercise greater care than usual longer than to-night, for they will think, if they don't see anything of me to-night, that I managed, in some manner, to escape from the town, and will relax their vigilance by to-morrow evening."

"I think likely you are right, my boy."

Dick finished eating, and they went into the library, where in front of a cozy fire in the grate they sat and talked. Mr. Hogan gave Dick all the information in his possession regarding the strength of the British forces in Trenton, and also at Burlington, six miles down the river.

"The bulk of the soldiers here are Hessians," said Mr. Hogan. "The majority of the British soldiers are at Burlington."

Dick made no reply, but looked thoughtfully in the fire for a few minutes. Mr. Hogan, after a while remarked: "To my mind, it would not be such an extremely difficult matter to defeat the force stationed here in Trenton. The

Hessians are hirelings, you know, are simply fighting because they are paid to do so, and they take no real personal interest in the matter at all, and consequently they are not likely to fight so stubbornly as the British."

"That is what I was just thinking," said Dick. "I'm glad that I have learned that, and doubtless if General Washington should decide to make an attack, he would make it here at Trenton."

"That would be my idea of good generalship," agreed Mr. Hogan.

They talked another hour or two, and then went to bed, Dick dropping asleep very soon after getting in bed.

The next day was spent indoors. Mr. Hogan went out, to his work, as usual, but Dick remained in the house. He did not want to take any chance of being again captured, for he realized that if he were to be recaptured, he would be shot. He shuddered, as he thought that on this evening, if he had not escaped from the jail, he would have been executed.

"I'm glad I escaped," he told himself. And then he thought of Tom and Ben, and wished that he might aid them to escape, but this was too dangerous to attempt, and anyhow they were

in no particular danger, as they had not done the work of spies, and would simply be held as prisoners of war.

Mr. Hogan had some stories to tell Dick, that evening, when he came home. He said that the British believed Dick had escaped from the town, and that he was now over in the patriot encampment across the river.

"I'm glad they think that," said Dick. "It will make it easier for me to slip through their lines to-night."

"Yes, but you will need to be very careful," said Mr. Hogan. "It would be bad if you were to be recaptured."

"Yes, they would shoot me, as they intended doing, I suppose," said Dick.

"Quite likely, my boy. But, I think you can get through their lines in safety."

"I'll do my best, at any rate," was the determined reply.

An hour or so after dark, Dick shook hands with his friends, bade him good-bye, and then stepped out upon the street and made his way toward the north edge of the town. It happened fortunately to be a dark, cloudy night, and Dick was enabled to slip along without being seen, till he

was at the extreme outskirts of Trenton, where the sentinels were stationed. Now to get through their lines without discovery.

Dick passed slowly and stealthily along, pausing every few steps to listen, and after going about one hundred yards in this manner, he heard the sound of voices. He listened intently, and made out that two of the sentinels were standing almost directly in front of him, and perhaps twenty yards distant, talking. He stood there, silent and motionless, and waited for the sentinels to get through talking and start to pacing their beats. In doing this, they would leave an opening between them, and it was Dick's intention to slip through this opening.

Presently the soldiers stopped talking, and Dick heard the crunching of the snow under their feet as they paced slowly away from each other, on their beats.

The patriot youth waited till he thought the two were perhaps thirty paces apart, and then he stole forward. He reached the beat, which he recognized by the snow being beaten down hard, and crossing it, continued onward, gradually increasing his pace. This was a mistake, however, for suddenly he stumbled over something and

fell headlong to the ground, making considerable noise.

That the noise was heard by the sentinels was quickly proven, for on the still night air rose the cries:

“Who is there?”

“Stay there! Don’t try to escape!”

These cries from the sentinels, and then one called to the other, in an excited voice:

“Possibly it is the rebel spy, trying to escape, comrade! He may not have left town last night, after all. Come, quick. Let’s investigate.”

Then Dick heard the sound of hurrying footsteps. The sentinels were coming toward him as fast as they could run.

CHAPTER XII

THE SENTINELS BAFFLED

THERE was only one thing for Dick to do, and that was to leap up and run for it, and he did this instantly.

Leaping to his feet, he dashed away at the top of his speed. The soldiers saw him, indistinctly of course, but sufficiently so that they knew it was a human being running, and they set out in pursuit, at the same time calling out commandingly:

“Halt, you rebel!”

“Stop, or we’ll fire!”

But Dick was determined not to be recaptured. To permit capture, would be certain death, for he would promptly be shot, and so he simply set his teeth and ran at the top of his speed.

“Halt, or we will fire!” again came the command, and as before, Dick paid no attention to the command.

On he dashed at the top of his speed, and after

a few moments, one shot, and then another rang out, and he heard a bullet go whizzing past his ear.

It was a close call, indeed, but it had no effect on Dick, for he simply kept on running with all his might.

"After him, comrade!" he heard one of the sentinels say. "We must catch the rebel, if such a thing is possible."

"Yes," the youth heard the other reply, "he may be Dick Dare, the spy that escaped last night."

"It is possible, comrade."

"And if we can catch him, it will be a big feather in our caps."

"Yes, so it will."

"But you won't catch me," thought Dick, grimly. "At least, I don't think you will. I have never yet seen a redcoat that could run as fast as I can, and their wind is not very good. They eat too much, and don't take enough exercise."

He ran as rapidly as possible, occasionally turning his head, to listen, as he could by this means tell whether the pursuers were following him.

He still continued to hear them, and they kept

up a running exchange of comments, which took not a little of the wind that they needed for use in running. Dick smiled grimly, as he thought of this.

"That's right. Keep right on talking, and telling each other that you are going to catch me," thought Dick. "It uses up a lot of wind that would help you to overtake me, and will help me to escape."

On he ran, and gradually the voices of his pursuers grew fainter, and finally could be heard no longer. Dick paused and listened intently.

"I guess they've given up the chase," he murmured. "Well, I am glad of it, for I was getting tired. But I guess they are more tired than I am."

He continued to listen for a few moments, and then, hearing no sound to indicate that the red-coats were coming, he made his way in the direction of the river.

"Now, if the boat is still where we left it the other night, I will soon be across the river and in camp," he murmured as he approached the place where the boat had been concealed.

He found the place, and felt around, but did not find the boat. A feeling of disappointment and dismay took hold of him.

"It looks as if somebody has found the boat and taken it away," he thought. "That is bad. How am I going to get across the river?"

This was indeed a puzzling question. The water was icy cold, and it would not do to try to swim across. He would get cramps and drown before he could get halfway to the other shore. And he doubted there being any other boats to be found along the river, for General Washington had had his soldiers gather up all the boats for a distance of ten miles up and down the stream, when his army crossed, and there were no boats on this side, with the exception of the one that Dick, Tom and Ben had come across in the other night.

And this boat might be miles away, for all he knew. It was probably tied up somewhere along Trenton's water front, but it might be down at Burlington.

Dick pondered a while. What was he to do? How was he to get to the encampment on the other side of the river?

This was indeed the question, and it was a difficult one. Dick, however, was equal to the solution. He decided that he would walk up the river several miles, and try to get hold of a boat.

It would be a big task, for he might have to walk eight or ten miles, likely, before finding a boat, but he was young, strong and athletic, and the task had no terrors for him.

"I've got all night for it," he told himself. "So I'll just strike out and see if I can find a boat. I am sure I can do so by going up the river farther than the soldiers did when they were gathering the boats at General Washington's order."

Dick set out along the shore, and continued onward perhaps half a mile, when he paused near a house of good size, for a country residence. A light was shining through the window of one of the rooms, and Dick made his way to the window and looked in. The shade was down, but the light shone through the shade, and at the bottom was an aperture an inch wide, the shade being that much short, and through this aperture Dick looked. To his surprise, he saw two British officers seated before a blazing fire in the huge fireplace, and they were talking to a portly man, who was evidently, judging by the way he laughed at the remarks of the red-coats, a loyal king's man.

Dick was seized with a desire to hear what the

British officers — one was a captain, and the other a lieutenant — were saying, and he at once made his way around to the rear of the house, and tried the backdoor, but found it fastened.

He then tried a window, and to his satisfaction, it was not fastened. He pushed it up, slowly and carefully, to keep from making a noise, and then, after listening a few moments, he stepped through the opening, into the room, which he guessed was a kitchen.

When he was in the room, he stood perfectly still a few moments, and again listened. All was quiet, however, except for the sound of occasional laughter from the front room.

"They didn't hear me enter," thought Dick. "Now I'll see if I can get near enough to them to hear what they are talking about, without being in danger of discovery."

Dick felt his way across the room, it being too dark in there for him to see anything, and when he reached the wall, he felt along it for a door. This he quickly found, and opening it cautiously, he poked his head through the opening, and listened.

He could see nothing, but guessed the door opened upon a hall, that probably led to the front

door. He could hear the voices and laughter much more plainly now.

He waited a few moments, and then stepped through the doorway and stole toward the front room on tiptoe, making scarcely any noise at all. Dick was rapidly developing into a splendid and expert spy. Somehow, he seemed to have a natural liking and talent for the work.

He progressed slowly and carefully, till he came to a door, on the righthand side, and he knew from the sound of the voices and laughter, that the door opened into the front room, where the two redcoats and the Tory were seated, drinking, smoking and talking and laughing.

Dick stooped and placed his eye to the keyhole and looked into the room. He could not see the inmates, but on placing his ear to the keyhole, he was enabled to hear what was said as plainly, almost, as if he were in the room with them.

This was satisfactory, but after listening a few minutes, he became convinced that he had had all his trouble for nothing, for the redcoats and Tory were not talking about anything of interest to Dick. In fact, they seemed to be merely telling stories, and at the end of each story there went up a roar of laughter. Evidently whatever

it was that they were drinking, it had the effect of putting them in a good humor.

Dick was disappointed. "I had hoped that I might hear some talk of importance," he thought. "I thought perhaps some kind of a plot against the patriots was on foot, and that these redcoats were here for that purpose, but I guess they simply have found out where they can get something to drink, and have come up here to spend the evening."

Dick wondered where the Tory's folks were, or if he had any. Possibly they had gone to bed, though it was early yet. Still, they might not care to visit with the redcoats.

Dick kept his position at the keyhole, and continued to listen, hoping that the men might get to talking of army affairs after a while, when he might secure some information that would be of value to General Washington.

But nothing of the kind happened. The men continued to tell stories and to laugh loudly, and they did not seem to think of anything in the way of so serious a matter as the war. They were simply spending a winter's evening in a social way.

Perhaps half an hour had passed, when sud-

denly, as Dick held his ear to the keyhole, he was given a start, for on the front door, which was right beside Dick, there came a loud rapping.

Thump, thump, thump! Loudly it sounded, causing Dick to jerk his head away from the keyhole of the door, and step back quickly a few paces, along the hall. Then a voice called out:

"Let me in! Do you hear, Job Muller? Open the door and let me in out of the cold."

Then Dick heard the sound of footsteps in the front room, and knew that Job Muller — evidently the name of the Tory — was coming to open the front door.

"I must get away from here, and quickly!" thought Dick. Then he turned and tiptoed hastily along the hall.

The next moment he heard the door of the front room open, and a quick glance over his shoulder showed him the Tory, who had stepped into the hall. Had he looked down the hall, he would have seen Dick, but his face was turned toward the front door, which he unbarred and threw open, showing a rough-looking man standing on the threshold.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TORY SPY

DICK hastily entered the kitchen, and then stood there, his head protruded, looking toward the end of the hall.

"Well, well, is it you, Josh?" he heard the Tory say in greeting. "Where did you come from?"

"New York, Mr. Muller," was the reply.

"You don't say. Where's your horse?"

"Left him at the Jennings place, a couple of miles back. He was completely fagged out, and couldn't travel any longer, so I left him there to rest up. I rode mighty hard all the afternoon."

"What was your hurry?"

"I made an important discovery, Mr. Muller, and wanted to get to the British encampment with the news as quickly as possible."

"Is that so? Then come right in. There are two British officers in the front room this very

minute. Come in, and tell them what you have learned."

"Good. I'll do so. That is lucky, their being here, as it will save me the trouble of going on in to Trenton to-night, and I'm mighty tired."

"I don't doubt it. Well, you can stay with me, Josh, and welcome. But, come on in and meet the officers."

Job Muller had closed and barred the front door while engaged in conversation with Josh, and now they entered the front room, and the door was closed behind them.

As may well be supposed, Dick Dare, who had heard all that was said, was deeply interested and somewhat excited.

"So Josh made an important discovery, did he, and nearly rode his horse to death in his haste to get to the British with the news? Well, I'm glad that I happened to get here just at the right time to hear what the information is that he brings. And I must hear it, too, for it may be something of the utmost importance to General Washington."

Dick lost no time in reflection and self-communion, however. He was making his way on tiptoe along the hall even while indulging in the above thoughts, and a few moments later he was

again at his station, with his ear pressed against the keyhole.

He heard the four men talking earnestly, and was not long in getting the drift of the conversation. The newcomer, Josh, was telling his story to the other three, and Dick, listening, thanked his lucky stars that he was there to hear what was said.

Josh stated that he had come from New York, and that yesterday morning he had discovered the encampment of a force of patriot soldiers, the force being about seventy-five miles distant. He had reconnoitered, and had sized up the force, and guessed it to number about three thousand men.

When Dick heard this, his heart swelled with delight. He knew General Washington's desperate need of soldiers, and he felt that if this force of three thousand could reach the patriot encampment, it would make the army sufficiently strong to enable it to offer defensive battle, if later on the British made an attack.

Listening intently and eagerly, Dick heard Josh continue. He said that from a Tory who lived within about a mile of the patriot encampment, he had learned that the patriot force was under the command of General Sullivan, and that it was

on its way to join the army of Washington, on the west side of the Delaware, but that the men were tired, sore-footed and almost worn-out as a result of much hard marching in the cold winter weather and on the rough roads, and that their progress was necessarily slow.

"It will be several days before they can reach and cross the river," said Josh, "and I thought that your soldiers, Captain Thorp, could go out and head them off and capture or annihilate them. That is the information I was in such haste to carry to your commander, and you can now take it to him yourself."

"We will go into camp at once," said the captain. "I have no doubt that General Percy and Colonel Rahl will be glad to make an attempt to capture the rebel force in question. You have done well in bringing us the information, Mr. Benton."

"Well, I'm a spy in the employ of your army, sir, you know," was the reply, "and it was my duty to get the news to you as quickly as possible."

"And it is our duty to get to General Percy with the news," said the captain. "We will take another drink together, and then the lieutenant and myself will be going."

Dick had now heard all that it was necessary for him to hear, and he took his ear away from the keyhole, and then stole along the hall on tip-toe.

He entered the kitchen and then stopped and waited, thinking he might hear a few words that would be of interest, as the British officers were leaving.

The officers appeared in the hall a few moments later, accompanied by Job Muller, who opened the door for them, and as they were turning to leave, the captain said to Josh Benton, who stood at the front room door: "Of course, you will guide a force to the rebel encampment, if our commander sees fit to send one."

"Oh, yes, of course," replied Josh, and then with a good-night, the two officers took their departure.

Dick waited a few minutes, to let the redcoats get far enough away so that they would not be likely to see him when he emerged, and then he stepped through the open window, out into the yard. While waiting, he had been doing some rapid thinking, and had decided what he would do.

Of course, he must go and warn General Sullivan of the danger that threatened his force, and

the quicker this was done, the better. So, with a view to doing this, Dick made his way to the barn, which he could see looming up a short distance away, in one corner of the yard. Opening the door, he entered, and, selecting the first horse he came to, he bridled and saddled it, having found bridle and saddle hanging on a wooden peg. Leading the horse out of the barn, he closed the door, and then, mounting, he rode away in the direction that would take him to the vicinity of General Sullivan's encampment.

As soon as he was far enough away from the house so that the ringing of the horse's hoofs on the frozen ground would not be heard — the snow melting in the daytime and the ground freezing at night — he urged the animal to a gallop, and rode onward at a swift pace for several hours.

It was cold, but Dick did not pay any attention to this. He was thinking of the errand upon which he was engaged, and a little discomfort did not bother him.

Josh Benton had stated that the force under Sullivan was seventy-five miles distant, and Dick figured that it would take him practically all the rest of the night to reach the vicinity of the encampment, as he could not go faster than seven or

eight miles an hour, for that long a stretch.

The country was strange to him, too, and he had no knowledge of the way the roads ran, and he would lose considerable time in picking his way. Everything considered, he judged that he would do well if he reached the patriot encampment by morning.

When he had been riding about five or six hours, he stopped in a little clump of timber by the roadside, and let his horse rest half an hour or so, and then mounted and continued his journey.

Onward he rode, turning corner after corner, and going generally in a northeastern direction. He believed that he would land somewhere in the vicinity of the patriot encampment by the time daylight came.

Onward he rode at a steady gait, till the sun rose, and then, sighting a house about a mile ahead, he headed in that direction, being determined to stop there and let his horse rest and get food for the animal and for himself.

As he drew nearer to the house, he saw that smoke was pouring out of the chimney, which was evidence that the people were up. Dick hoped that the woman of the house was getting breakfast, for he was very hungry.

"I hope the folks are patriots," the youth thought, as he drew near the house. "That will make it easier and simpler for me, and safer as well, for some of these Tories are rather vicious, and likely to try to do a patriot an injury, rather than give him food or aid him in any way."

Reaching the door, Dick dismounted and knocked, and presently the door was opened by a man of perhaps forty years, who surveyed Dick curiously.

"Good morning, sir," said Dick. "I am a traveler, and would like to procure breakfast for myself and feed for my horse. Will you be so kind as to accommodate me?"

"Well, I reckon I kin," was the reply, after a brief hesitation. "Go in ther house, stranger, an' I'll take yer hoss to ther stable an' feed 'im."

"Thank you, sir," said Dick, and he entered, the man calling past him to a woman, evidently his wife, who was cooking at the open fireplace: "Here's a stranger what wants breakfast, Mirandy. Cook an extry portion uf grub for him, while ye're about it."

"All right, Jim," was the reply, and the woman nodded to Dick, as he entered the room, and motioned toward a chair.

"Kind uf cold weather we're havin', Mister," she said.

"Yes, rather cold, ma'am," replied Dick, as he seated himself in front of the fireplace and held out his hands to warm them.

The woman made no reply, but went on with her cooking, and presently the man entered and seated himself near Dick, whom he regarded with an intent and searching look that Dick, noticing it, did not fancy. He did not let on that he took notice of the man's regard, however, but waited, feeling sure that his host would say something that would enlighten him as to the reason for the searching look presently. And he was right, for suddenly the man said, drawlingly:

"Thet's a good hoss ye've got, young feller. I oughter know, 'cause I raised 'im frum a colt. I sold 'im about six months ago, but have be'n sorry I done it, for he was the best horse I had on the place. Whare did ye git 'im?"

Dick realized that the fact that his host recognized the horse was likely to cause him trouble. He must account for having the horse in his possession, but how was he to do it? Dick did some swift thinking, and then thought he saw his way out of the difficulty.

CHAPTER XIV

A VICIOUS TORY

“**I** BOUGHT the horse,” he replied.
“Who frum?”

“Job Muller.”

“He lives over by Trenton, hey?”

“Yes, sir.”

The man nodded. “Humph,” he said. “I sold ther hoss to Josh Benton, an’ he sold ’im to Muller. Josh was here yesterday mornin’, ridin’ another hoss, an’ he told me he had sold the hoss to Muller, an’ that he wouldn’t take anything’ fur ’im.”

Dick nodded. “He sold the horse to me yesterday,” he said, and the man seemed to be satisfied.

When breakfast was ready, Dick sat up to the table with Mr. Scroggs and his wife and ate heartily. The ride through the night and cold had made him hungry.

When they had eaten, and were sitting in front of the fire, the host began talking, and he also began to ask Dick questions. It did not take Dick long to size his host up as a Tory, and this knowledge made the patriot youth decide that he had better move on as quickly as possible. He said something to this effect, and Mr. Scroggs remarked that there was no use being in a hurry.

"Oh, I've been here quite a while," said Dick.

"I'll bring yer hoss around," volunteered the host, and Dick thanked him, saying he need not take the trouble, that he could do that himself.

"Oh, it ain't no trouble," was the reply. Then he left the house, and in about ten minutes was at the front door, which he opened, stuck in his head and said: "Here's yer horse, young man."

Dick was ready, and after offering to pay for his breakfast and the feed for his horse and having his offer refused, he bade Mrs. Scroggs good-bye, went out and climbed into the saddle.

"I'm much obliged to you for your kindness to me, Mr. Scroggs," said Dick. "And now, perhaps you can do something else for me."

"Whut?" queried Mr. Scroggs.

"Do you know of a force of patriot sol-

diers anywhere around in this neighborhood?"

"Yes," was the reply, "it's about a mile to the north, but —" He stopped and stared at Dick for a few moments, searchingly, then went on: "Say, are you one of them blamed rebels?"

Dick shook his head, and smiled. He was in the saddle, now, and ready to get away from there quickly, if he wished to do so, and he was not afraid to let the Tory know he was a patriot.

"No, I'm not a rebel," he replied. "But, I'm a patriot, Mr. Scroggs."

"A blamed rebel!" growled the Tory, his face darkening. "An' I took ye in and fed ye, an' treated ye like ye was somebody!"

"For which you have my thanks, sir," said Dick, quietly. "Or, if you wish, now that you know I am a patriot, I will pay you for the food."

The Tory shook his head. "No, I don't want no pay," he growled. "But I shure do hate to be fooled that way."

"I'm sorry, sir," said Dick. "You didn't ask me if I were a patriot, and I didn't think it worth while to tell you."

"What do ye want to know where the rebel army is, for?" asked Scroggs, suddenly, a suspicious look on his face.

"I have a curiosity to see the patriot soldiers, that is all," replied Dick.

"I don't believe nothin' of the kind," cried the Tory, taking a step toward Dick. "I believe ye are a rebel spy, an' thet ye are on your way to the rebel camp to carry news of some kind to the rebel commander. Is that the truth, young feller?"

"I wouldn't tell you, if it was," replied Dick, with dignity. "Well, I must be going. I thank you again, Mr. Scroggs, for the kindness you have shown me. Good-bye."

"Hol' on!" shouted the Tory, making a leap and attempting to grasp the bridle-reins and prevent Dick from starting on his journey.

But Dick gave the horse a sharp slap with the end of the reins, the animal leaped forward quickly, and Scroggs failed to get hold of the reins.

"Stop, I tell ye!" yelled the Tory, starting after Dick, who was urging his horse toward the road. "Ye are a rebel, an' I'm not goin' to let ye get to their rebel camp with the news, whatever it is."

Dick urged the horse to a gallop, however, and quickly and easily left the Tory behind, and he,

realizing that he could not catch the youth, stopped and yelled viciously: "Ye're a blamed rebel, an' I'll bet ye stole thet horse from Muller! Ye'd better look out, for if ye stay aroun' in these parts, I may git hold of ye yet."

"Good-bye," called out Dick, and started up the road. He glanced back, and saw Scroggs running into the house. Dick wondered why he had done this, but did not have to wonder long, for a few moments later he saw the Tory emerge, with a rifle in his hands and run to the stump of a tree near the house, where he knelt, leveled the rifle over the top of the stump, and was evidently taking aim, preparatory to firing at his late guest.

Realizing that he was in danger, since most of these farmers and settlers were good shots, and he was still within range, Dick urged his horse to its swiftest pace and bent forward on its neck, to afford as slight a target for the man's aim as possible.

Crack! The Tory had fired, but without effect, for Dick was not hit. Knowing that he would be out of range before the man could reload the rifle, the patriot youth straightened up in the saddle, waved his hand to the disappointed king's man, and rode onward swiftly.



Leveled the rifle over the stump.

"Some of these Tories are vicious fellows," thought Dick. "They would as lief kill a fellow as not."

He was not injured, however, and rode onward in good spirits, and in about twenty minutes he came to the patriot encampment, which was located in the edge of the timber, where plenty of firewood could be had, and brisk camp-fires were burning brightly.

Dick was challenged, and told the sentinel who he was and that he wished to see General Sullivan immediately, as he had important information for him. The sentinel summoned the officer of the guard and he listened to what Dick had to say. Then he conducted him at once to General Sullivan's tent.

General Sullivan had seen Dick before, during the Long Island campaign, and recognized him at once. He welcomed him heartily, and then asked how he happened to be there.

Dick quickly explained about having been a prisoner in the hands of the British at Trenton, and how he had escaped and had overheard a Tory spy give the information regarding the presence of the patriot force, to the British officers, who had stated that undoubtedly a force

would be sent to head the patriot force off and keep it from crossing the Delaware River and joining Washington's army.

When General Sullivan had heard all, he thanked Dick earnestly.

"I am glad that you brought me this information, Dick," he said. "If you had not done so, my force would probably have fallen into the hands of the British, for I was intending to remain here another day or two, to let my men rest, they being almost worn out from hard marching from up in the Highlands. But now that I know it is dangerous to remain here, we will break camp and march to the Delaware and cross it as quickly as possible."

"By taking a course a few miles farther to the north than you otherwise would have done, you will likely be able to avoid the British," said Dick.

"True, Dick, and that is what we will do."

"It will be necessary to strike the Delaware at a point ten or twelve miles above Trenton, anyway," said Dick. "Otherwise, you could not get across, for there are no boats. General Washington gathered them all up, and took them across to the other side, so as to make it impos-

sible for the British to cross the river and attack him."

"I see," nodded Sullivan. "That is important, and we will aim to strike the river at least a dozen or twenty miles north of Trenton."

"That will be best," said Dick.

An hour later, the patriot force was on the march, and it went almost straight west, so as to keep away from the British, if a force was sent up to head them off.

By making forced marches, however, the patriot force reached the river in much quicker time than might have been expected. A hasty search along the shore brought to light half a dozen boats of various sizes, and the patriots at once began crossing the stream.

They had just finished and were tying the boats to trees on the west bank of the river when a large force of British soldiers appeared on the east bank, where it was forced to stop.

"We got across just in time," said General Sullivan, smilingly, to Dick, and the youth nodded and smiled with satisfaction, and said:

"Yes, General Sullivan. I'll wager those red-coats are a disappointed lot of men."

"Quite likely," with another smile. "Well,

they have you to thank for their disappointment, and we have you to thank, for saving our force from perhaps capture or annihilation, Dick."

"Oh, I did only my duty," said Dick, modestly. "And I am mighty glad that I was able to give you information that enabled you to escape the enemy."

The force now set out, and a few hours later reached the main patriot encampment, where it was given a rousing welcome. General Washington was surprised, for he had not known of Sullivan's coming, and he was immensely pleased as well, for now he had a strong enough force to enable him to put into effect a plan that he had in mind — a plan that, if successful, would make Christmas a glorious day for the patriots and turn the British festivities into scenes of lamentations.

CHAPTER XV

A COUNCIL OF WAR

GENERAL WASHINGTON was surprised to see Dick Dare with General Sullivan's force, as he had supposed the youth was at his home a few miles east of Philadelphia, in New Jersey, visiting his mother and sister. When the youth had told his story, however, of his capture, escape, and how he had heard important information regarding an attempt that was to be made to capture General Sullivan's force, and then had hastened to carry the news to him, the commander-in-chief complimented Dick highly, and said that he had indeed performed a wonderful service for the great Cause. And he was still further delighted when Dick gave him information as to the strength of the British forces in Trenton and Burlington.

General Washington, after hearing all, called a council of war, and Dick was present, as it would likely be necessary to ask him occasional

questions about the location of the British and Hessian troops. The matter of making an attack on the British at Trenton and Burlington was discussed at great length, and it was decided that such an attack would be made. And it was thought that on Christmas Day, owing to the fact that the British would have their minds on the festivities incident to that time, and would be in a measure befuddled by drink, would be the best time to make the attack.

There was a sufficient interval to make preparations, as Christmas was more than a week off, and the details could be discussed at later councils, all the plans mapped out, and all arrangements made that would in any way aid in making of the attack a success.

General Washington was enthused. The coming of the three thousand additional troops had given him courage, and he was filled with hope, and did not hesitate to state that he believed it possible to strike the British a blow that they would not soon forget — a blow, too, that would arouse the country, enthuse patriots everywhere, and give the war for independence a new and strong impetus.

After the council adjourned, Dick went to his

cabin, and was given a hearty greeting by his comrades, and especially by Tim Murphy and Fritz Schmockenburg, who thought there was no one in the world like Dick Dare.

"Sure an' it's glad we are to see yez back, Dick, me bye," said Tim, smiling broadly. "But, phwere are Tom an' Ben?"

"Yah, vere iss Tom und Ben, alretty?" from Fritz.

"In the jail, over in Trenton, prisoners of war, to the British," replied Dick.

"Phwat!" cried Tim, a sober look appearing on his face. "Thot is bad, Dick. How did it happen?"

"Yah, dot iss der vorst news vot I haf heard alretty yet, Dick," said Fritz. "How did id habben?"

Dick told them, briefly, and they were loud in their angry denunciations of Zeke Boggs and Lem Hicks, the Tory youths who had caused the capture of Dick, Tom and Ben.

"Oi'd loike to get hould av thim two byes," said Tim, grimly. "It's meself would shake thim till their teeth rattled, sure an' Oi would."

"Yah, dot iss vat ve vould do," nodded Fritz.

"Still, the way it worked out, they did not do

me any damage," said Dick. "I was in danger of being shot as a spy, but I escaped, and in doing so I became possessed of valuable information that enabled me to keep General Sullivan's force from being captured."

"But, no thanks to thim Tory byes for thot," said Tim. "Oi'd loike to shake thim, so Oi would."

"But, Tom and Ben—vat about dem?" queried Fritz. "Dey are brisoners yet, you haf said, Dick. Vill dey not be shotted alretty, hey?"

"No, Fritz," was the reply. "They have never acted as spies, and so are merely held as prisoners of war, and are in no danger of being put to death. And when we attack Trenton, and drive the British out of the town, we will set the boys free."

"Yah—uf ve can do dot, Dick. Do you t'ink ve can?"

"General Washington is going to make the attempt," replied Dick. "And I believe that he will be successful."

"Hurroo!" cried Tim, his face shining with delight. "The gineral is goin' to go acrost the river an' attack the ridcoats, is he, Dick?"

"Yes, Tim."

"Whin, me bye?"

"Soon. Within a week or so, likely."

"Hurroo!" again cried Tim. "Thot is the bist news Oi have heard in a month at laste. It's sp'ilin' fur a foight Oi am, an' it's mesilf wull be deloighted to get another whack at the rid-coats."

"Yah, I vill lige to get anudder lick at der retgoads," said Fritz, who was as pleased as Tim, but who did not show it quite so plainly, being of a phlegmatic temperament.

They both declared they were glad that Tom and Ben were in no danger, and then the three settled down to talk of the matters that interested them.

When they had exhausted the war, and the expected crossing of the Delaware and attacking of the British at Trenton, they turned to the discussion of ordinary matters, and Dick asked if the two had been hunting since he went away.

They had, they said, but neither had killed any large game, having succeeded in bringing down some rabbits, squirrels and a few turkeys.

"So I am der bestest hunter, alretty, Dick," grinned Fritz. "I haf killed ein bear, und Tim

has not killed any big game, so I haf beat him, yah."

"Oi'll niver belave yez killed thot bear, Dootchy," growled Tim. "It's me belief thot Dick shot it, an' Oi'm just as good a hunter as ye are."

"Dick vill tell you dot I vos killed dot bear," said Fritz, stolidly. "Ain't dot so, Dick? Didn't you said dot I vos killed der bear, hey?"

"Yes, I said so, Fritz," smiled Dick. "I am sure you killed the bear. You know, I said so at the time, just after you had finished the job."

"Yah, I remember dot," with a nod. Then to Tim: "Vot you t'ink now, Tim Murphies, hey?"

"Oi think the same as Oi thought before," growled Tim. "Maybe yez did kill the bear, but it's meself would be willin' to bet thot Dick had killed it furst."

Dick laughed at this, and even Fritz grinned a bit, but quickly resumed his stolid air of soberness and said:

"All righd. T'ink dot vay uf you want to, Tim Murphies, but one of dese days I'll kill ein bear righd before your eyes, und den you gannod deny id, yah."

“Whin Oi see yez shoot a bear to death, Oi’ll belave it,” said Tim, “but as Oi said before, Oi’m bettin’ Dick killed thot bear before ye did.”

The three talked on till supper time, and then ate heartily, after which they sat before the fire and talked two or three hours, while outside the wind howled, and the snow, which had begun falling at evening, came down thickly and swirled about the cabins in the encampment, as if determined to bury them from sight.

The snow ceased falling some time during the night, however, and next morning the weather was very cold. If it stayed as cold as this for a few days, the river would freeze over, and then the British would be enabled to cross and make an attack.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS EVER KNOWN

THE weather continued bad for nearly a week, and the river was frozen over, but not thick enough to permit of an army crossing on the ice. Then the weather moderated, and soon open water appeared again in the middle of the stream.

General Washington and the members of his staff were busily engaged getting ready for the attack on Trenton, this having been definitely decided upon, and the evening before Christmas all was ready.

It had been decided to make the attack in three divisions, one to consist of 2,000 men, under the command of Cadwalader, and to cross opposite Burlington and attack the British there, and another force, under Ewing, was to cross opposite Trenton, while Generals Washington, Sullivan and Gates were to go nine miles up the river,

cross there with 2,500 men, and march down on the other side and attack Trenton.

It was indeed a bold and daring plan, and one such as only Washington could conceive, and such as only he could execute, as it proved, for next day, which was Christmas, when Cadwalader tried to get his soldiers across the river, he failed, owing to the fact that huge chunks and blocks of ice, broken loose from away up the river, by the thaw, were floating down the stream, and battered the boats to such an extent that the attempt had to be given up, for fear of losing a large number of the soldiers by drowning, the ice threatening to wreck the frail boats.

Ewing, who was to have crossed opposite Trenton, did not even make the attempt. He realized that it would be extremely hazardous, and so did not try to cross, and he supposed that Washington would be foiled also, and give over the attempt. Both he and Cadwalader sent special messengers up the river to acquaint Washington with the fact that they had been unable to cross.

The messengers reached General Washington just as evening was coming on. The division under the commander-in-chief had just reached the point where it was intended to make a crossing.

When Washington was informed of the failure of the other two divisions, he called a council with Sullivan and Gates, and they discussed the matter of continuing on, and making an attack alone, and it was decided to do so, if the men who were to handle the boats thought it possible to get across the Delaware in safety. These men had been picked by the commander-in-chief because of their peculiar fitness for the work, they being fishermen, from Marblehead, Massachusetts, and more at home on the water than on the land, and used to battling with the elements.

The old fisherman who was to have charge of the work of handling the boats was summoned, and Washington asked him if they could get the army across in safety.

"I think so, sir," was the reply. "It will be dangerous, but with care, I think we can do it."

"How long will it take?" the commander-in-chief asked.

"All night," was the reply.

"Very well," said the patriot commander, "We will cross then. Begin the work at once."

This was done, and at once the work of transferring the army from the west to the east side of the river began. It was a terrible task, and a

dangerous one, but Generals Washington, Sullivan and Gates superintended the work, seeing to it that the boats were not overloaded, and were capably manned with fishermen oarsmen, and a little while before daylight next morning, the 2,500 soldiers were on the New Jersey side of the Delaware, and were ready to begin the march to Trenton, nine miles down the river.

Nine miles, under ordinary circumstances, would not be such a great distance to walk, but when it is remembered that these patriot soldiers had been up all night, wearily and anxiously traversing the dangerous waters of the Delaware, and with only a little cold food to eat, the task of marching that distance becomes a rather formidable one. But with General Washington on hand to encourage them to unusual efforts, the soldiers did not falter, but set out on the march to Trenton.

Dick Dare was with this force, and he marched along as bravely as any of the soldiers. In fact, he stood the exposure better than the majority, for he was young and strong. Tim Murphy and Fritz Schmockenburg were along also, and were standing the exposure and hardships very well. Fritz was so fat he did not mind the cold, but the

walking was hard for him, because of his weight. But he made no complaint, and kept beside Dick and Tim, and presented a cheerful front.

"Sure an' Oi hope thot we foind a foight at the ind av this trail," said Tim. "Oi feel the nade av some strenuous exercise to warm me up, after bein' out in the cold for so long."

"I t'ink dot ve vill find fighdin' ven, ve ged to Trenton, alretty, Tim," said Fritz.

"Oi hope so."

"There will be fighting, I am sure, Tim," said Dick.

"Wull, thot is phwat Oi want, Dick, me bye."

"Und so iss dot vat I vant," said Fritz. "I bet dot ve lick der stuffin's oud uf der retgoads, yah."

"We'll try, at any rate, Fritz," said Dick.

On they marched, slowly and painfully, for now it was snowing and sleeting, and this made the walking very difficult, and the illy-clad soldiers suffered greatly, the sleet and snow penetrating through their clothing and chilling them to the bone. But they marched onward, nor did they complain. They were as eager as their commander to strike the British a blow, and would not give up till they had done so.

There was one thing that gave General Washington and his officers hope, and that was the fact that on such a morning the British would not be likely to be expecting an attack. And, too, it being the morning after Christmas, the Hessian and British soldiers would likely sleep late, and wake up in a somewhat befuddled condition, which would enable the patriots to get the better of them.

On marched the shivering, hungry soldiers, with grim determination, and shortly after sunrise they appeared in sight of Trenton. Here the force was divided into two divisions, one under General Sullivan and one under General Greene, and they entered the town at different points. General Washington had general command over both columns, and rode hither and thither on his charger, giving directions. He also superintended the planting of the guns, and when all was ready, fire was opened with the cannon, and the soldiers charged into the town, firing upon the Hessian soldiers as they showed themselves.

Colonel Rahl, the commander at Trenton, aroused from sleep by the sound of the firing of the cannon and muskets, leaped up and dashed

out, he having thrown himself down late that morning, with his clothes on. He did his best to get his men out and in a position to show fight, but could not make much headway, and the result was that he was mortally wounded, and seventeen of his soldiers were shot down very quickly, and the next officer in command, seeing the hopelessness of resistance, surrendered, and turned over to General Washington one thousand Hessian soldiers as prisoners of war.

The patriot force had lost only four men, two in the battle, and two who were frozen to death on the march from the landing-place to Trenton. It was indeed a great victory, and it turned the tide from despair to hope, and as soon as the matter became known throughout the country, it caused the patriots to become imbued with renewed courage. With such a commander as Washington, it was possible, they believed, to defeat the British and bring about the independence of the American people.

The victory over the British troops at Trenton, coming just at this time, was the turning-point of the War for Independence, for the terms of service of the majority of the patriot soldiers expired the first of the year, and most of them

would have gone to their homes, thinking it hopeless to continue the contest, but now that they had won such a glorious victory, they were encouraged and enthused, and readily signed with the army for another year. And, too, many recruits came in and joined the army, and it began growing in numbers and strength at once.

So Christmas of the year 1776 may well be set down as having been the greatest Christmas ever known, at least in so far as it refers to the American people.

CHAPTER XVII

TOM AND BEN

AS soon as the encounter was over, and the Hessians had been made prisoners, Dick went to the jail, and pounded on the door. It was opened presently by the jailer, who looked at Dick a few moments and said :

“ Why, you’re the young fellow that was in here, a prisoner, a week or so ago ! ”

“ Yes,” agreed Dick. “ And there were two friends of mine, or rather, my brother and a friend, here also. Are they here yet ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, they were merely prisoners of war, and as we have just whipped the British, or rather, their Hessian hirelings, there is no longer reason why they should remain here, prisoners. So I have come to ask that they be released.”

The jailer looked undecided, and hesitated, and Dick at once guessed that he was really a Tory

at heart, so he put on a severe expression and said, somewhat sternly:

"You are not a British soldier, and so you have no right to hold those boys prisoners on that account, and in fact you have no right to keep them here at all, and I demand that you set them free."

The face of the jailer flushed, and it was evident he did not relish being talked to in that manner.

"I will have to take time to think the matter over," he said. "I don't think that I could free them on your say so, anyway."

"Then I will find a way to make you," asserted Dick.

"Perhaps," was the doubting response, and then he added: "They came mighty near getting away without permission."

This was news to the youth, but the jailer vouchsafed no further information.

Dick was vexed, but he did not let it show. On the contrary he was cool and calm, and after thinking a moment, said: "Very well. I will go to General Washington and get an order from him for the release of the prisoners."

"That is the only thing to do," was the reply.

"General Washington is in command here, now, and I will have to obey his orders, the same as I obeyed the orders of the British."

"Are there any other patriot prisoners here?"

"No."

"Very well. I'll get the order at once. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Then Dick hastened away, and was soon in the presence of General Washington, at the tavern where he had taken up temporary quarters, while waiting to decide upon his future course.

Dick quickly explained his errand, and the commander-in-chief at once wrote an order for the release of the two prisoners, and with the order in his hand, Dick hastened to the jail, and was admitted by the jailer, who took the order, read it, stuck it on a hook, and then led the way along the hall, to the door of a room, which he unlocked, and then he entered, followed by Dick.

Tom and Ben had been seated on the edge of the cot, but when the two entered and they saw who their visitors were, the youths leaped up and hastened forward and grabbed Dick's hands and shook them joyously, uttering delighted exclamations as they did so.

"How are you, Dick?"

"Say, we're glad to see you, old fellow!"

"There was a battle, wasn't there!"

"And who whipped, Dick?"

Such were a few of the questions the two poured forth, and Dick laughingly shook himself loose, and said:

"One question at a time, boys. Yes, there was an encounter, this morning, it could hardly be called a battle. We took the Hessians by surprise, and killed a few of them and captured one thousand. We are here, with two thousand, five hundred men, and the town is ours. And I have come to free you boys," he said, in conclusion.

"Oh, good, Dick!" cried Tom. "I'll be mighty glad to get out of here, I tell you."

"And so will I," from Ben.

"Then come right along with me. We will go to our quarters at once, boys."

The two youths glanced at the jailer, who nodded, without smiling, and said:

"General Washington sent an order for your release, and so you may go."

"Hurrah!" cried Tom, and he leaped out through the doorway, followed by Ben, and after him came Dick, while the jailer was last, he pausing to lock the door. Then a few moments later

Dick, Tom and Ben left the jail and made their way to a building not far distant, in which was quartered the company of soldiers that the three youths were members of.

They entered the building and were given a hearty greeting by the soldiers, all of whom liked the boys immensely. The liveliness and good nature of the youths had done much, during the past few hard months, to cheer the patriot soldiers and make them endure the hardships they had been exposed to without a murmur.

"Sure, an', it's glad we are to have ye two byes back wid us ag'in," said Tim Murphy, his face shining with pleasure.

"Yah, ve vos been glad dot you vos mit us vonst more, alretty, poys," said Fritz Schmockenburg.

"And we're mighty glad to be here with you again, I tell you!" declared Tom.

"Yes, indeed," from Ben.

The British at Burlington, six miles down the river, learned of the capture of Trenton by the patriot army, at once, of course, and they broke camp, and leaving all their sick soldiers and all the heavy arms and baggage, went by a round-about route to Princeton, where they began throwing up earthwork defenses.

Cadwalader and his forces of patriot soldiers got across the river, next day, and took charge of the deserted camp, and camp equipage, and General Washington moved his one thousand prisoners over into Pennsylvania, but did not stay there, returning to Trenton on the 29th, where he settled down to await the action of the British.

CHAPTER XVIII

BRILLIANT WORK

WHEN the news of the victory of General Washington and the patriot troops over the Hessians at Trenton reached New York, it put a stop to the holiday feasting in a hurry. General Cornwallis, who had sent his baggage aboard a ship, and had intended to sail for England as soon as the Christmas festivities were ended, thinking the war at an end, did not make the start, but instead, mounted a horse and rode to Princeton as quickly as possible, where he took command of the British force, and got ready to begin another campaign against the patriots.

On the morning of January 2nd, he broke camp and advanced toward Trenton, with the intention of making an attack, but when the army was about halfway to its destination, six hundred patriot soldiers, under the command of General Greene, stationed in the timber along the route of march, began firing upon the redcoats, and with

such effect that the British were thrown into confusion, and their march was greatly retarded.

The British tried to retaliate. Their bullets however fired into the timber, injured the trees somewhat, but did not do much damage to the patriots, and it was not until late in the afternoon that the British army appeared in front of Trenton. And by that time General Washington had moved his army across the Assunpink, a small stream that ran into the Delaware, just south of Trenton, and on the bank of this creek he had thrown up earthworks, and the bridge and fords were protected by admirably placed batteries, so that when the British, advancing, tried to cross, they were repulsed with considerable loss.

After trying this two or three times, General Cornwallis gave up the attempt for that day, as evening was at hand and his soldiers were almost exhausted as a result of their hard march from Princeton, and to his under officers Cornwallis said that on the morrow they would bend Washington's army back against the Delaware and capture it, thus ending the war.

But General Washington was not to be taken thus easily, or indeed at all. He knew the intentions of General Cornwallis, for what that

officer was figuring on doing was what he himself would have intended doing under the same circumstances, and he set about foiling his enemy. To this end, he ordered that campfires should be built along the creek-front, and kept burning all night, and that a small force of perhaps a score of soldiers should work with spades and pick-axes till the small hours of the morning, ostensibly throwing up defenses, and during that time the patriot army would slip away up the south bank of the creek, get around the British left wing, and advance to Princeton, overpower any force that might be there, and then continue on to Morristown Heights, where it could take up what would be an impregnable position.

The ones who were to remain and perform the work that was to deceive the British into the belief that the patriots were still in camp on the south bank of the creek, were chosen from volunteers, and among them were Dick, Tom and Ben, and they were delighted to be detailed upon such dangerous work. For it was dangerous. The British might suspect the trick and make a sudden charge across the Assunpink at any moment, and then it would be a difficult matter to escape.

"Say, this is the kind of work I like," said

Tom, enthusiastically, when the volunteers had begun work. "We are doing something that is dangerous and of immense importance as well."

"Yes, that is a pleasing kind of work to do," said Dick.

"If we can keep the British deceived till morning, our army will be out of danger from the red-coats," said Ben. "I'm glad to be helping in this task."

Indeed, the three youths were well pleased, for as has already been shown in the Dare Boys books that have been published, and as will be further evidenced in the next volume of the series, which will be entitled "The Dare Boys at Brandywine," Dick, Tom and Ben were brave and intensely patriotic youths.

The patriot army stole away, and moved up along the south bank of the Assunpink, crossed at a ford a couple of miles distant, marched past the left wing of the British, and away toward the north.

A little before sunrise the troops that General Cornwallis had sent for, to join his force at Trenton, to assist in the attack on the patriots that morning, were met on the road between Princeton and Trenton, and the British, mistak-

ing the advance guard of the patriot army for a party of fugitives, hastened to intercept them, with the result that they found themselves engaged in a sharp encounter at once.

For a while the skirmish between the two advance guards was about an equal thing, but presently the main forces arrived on the scene, and General Washington commanding his army in person, inspired his men to such valor that they speedily cut the British lines in two, and one portion fled toward Trenton, while the other retreated toward New Brunswick.

It was a victory for the patriots, who lost only about 100, while the British loss in killed and wounded was 200, and prisoners to the number of 300 were taken, making the total British loss about 500.

The patriot army then continued onward stopping at Princeton only a short time, to rest and secure the provisions and ammunition that had been left there by the British, and then it continued the march northward, and took up a position on Morristown Heights.

Back at the deserted encampment on the south bank of the Assunpink, the patriot soldiers worked nearly the whole night, making as much

noise as they could with their picks and spades, and the British undoubtedly rested easy in the thought that the patriots were still there, and that their capture in the morning would be accomplished without much trouble.

A couple of hours before sunrise, however, the patriot soldiers who had performed the work of deceiving the enemy, ceased their labors and in their turn stole up the south bank of the Assunpink, crossed and hastened in the direction of Princeton, and reaching there, continued onward to Morristown Heights, where they rejoined the patriot army.

General Cornwallis, and his officers, hearing the sound of the cannon on the Princeton road, early that morning, at once leaped to the correct conclusion, that they had been deceived, and on sending some soldiers across the Assunpink to investigate, learned that the patriot encampment was abandoned and that no soldiers were there. Immediately Cornwallis ordered a forced march northward, in the direction of the point from which the firing had sounded, and presently the portion of the body of troops that had fled toward Trenton, after the meeting with the patriot army, was met and from them the British general

learned the story of the battle, and guessed where the patriot army was heading for. He followed as rapidly as possible, but when he reached Princeton, the patriots had gone on north, and after a council of war, it was decided not to pursue further, as the patriots could repulse any attack that might be made on them, after taking up their position on Morristown Heights. And having decided thus, Cornwallis gave the order to march to New Brunswick, which was done.

A few days after Washington and his army took up its position on Morristown Heights, General Putnam advanced from Philadelphia and occupied Princeton, thus forming the right wing of the patriot army, while a force under General Heath, over on the Hudson, constituted the left wing. Then General Clinton, came down from Peekskill, drove the British from there, and took possession of that point, and on the same day a force of Hessians at Springfield was routed by the patriots. Shortly afterward Elizabethtown was captured by General Maxwell, the British retiring to Newark.

Thus, in a campaign lasting only three weeks, General Washington, with a broken and almost discouraged army that was scarcely more than a

handful of men, comparatively speaking, had fought and won two battles, taken nearly 2,000 prisoners and had recaptured the State of New Jersey. Indeed, by thus taking the offensive at a time when the war had been regarded as practically ended, and by sheer force of genius winning battles against superior numbers, he had completely restored the confidence of the people and had again imbued them with the belief that independence could be achieved, with the result that he was constantly receiving fresh accessions of recruits, and his army grew steadily, until it again reached goodly proportions, and with the coming of Spring he believed that he could take the field against the British and meet them on equal terms.

There was general rejoicing in the patriot army, all the soldiers being in good spirits and happy, as a result of their wonderful success against the British, but among them all, there were none more delighted or happier than Dick and Tom Dare and Ben Foster, who frequently assured one another that they were indeed happy because they were members of the Patriot Army of America.

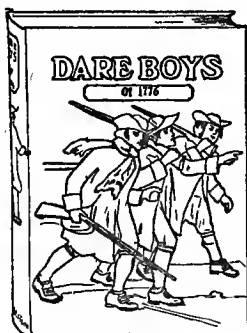
“And we’ll whip the British and win our in-

dependence, that's certain as anything can be," declared Tom, one evening as they were discussing the war, in their quarters on Morristown Heights. "Don't you think so, Dick?"

And Dick Dare, smilingly nodded and said, confidently:

"Yes, I think so, Tom."

THE END



The Dare Boys

By
Stephen Angus Cox

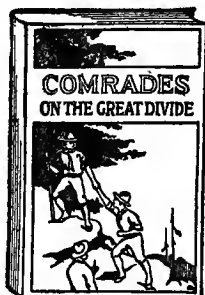
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